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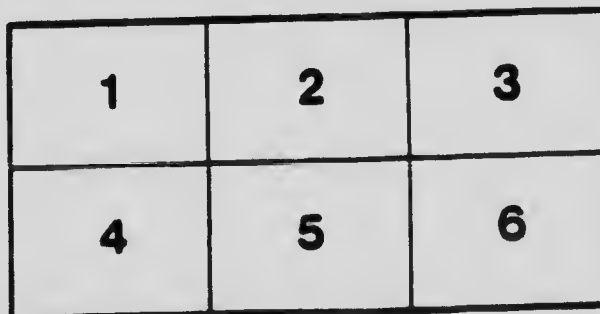
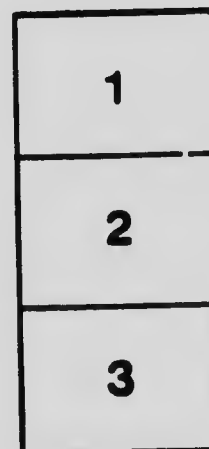
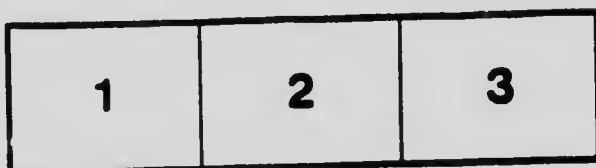
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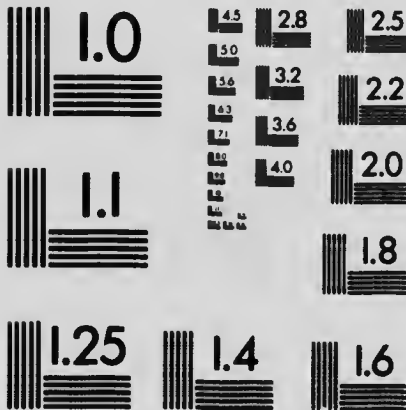
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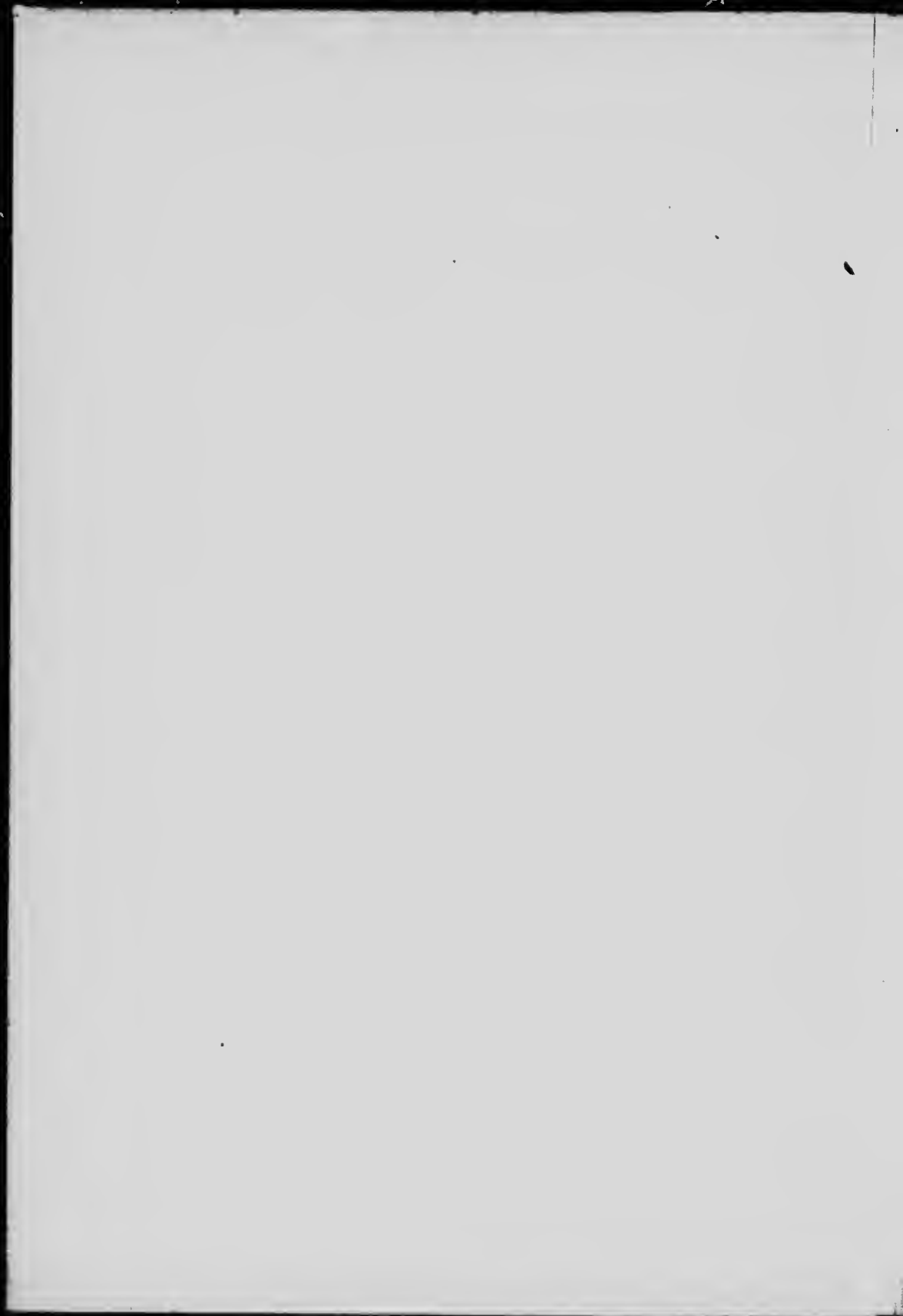
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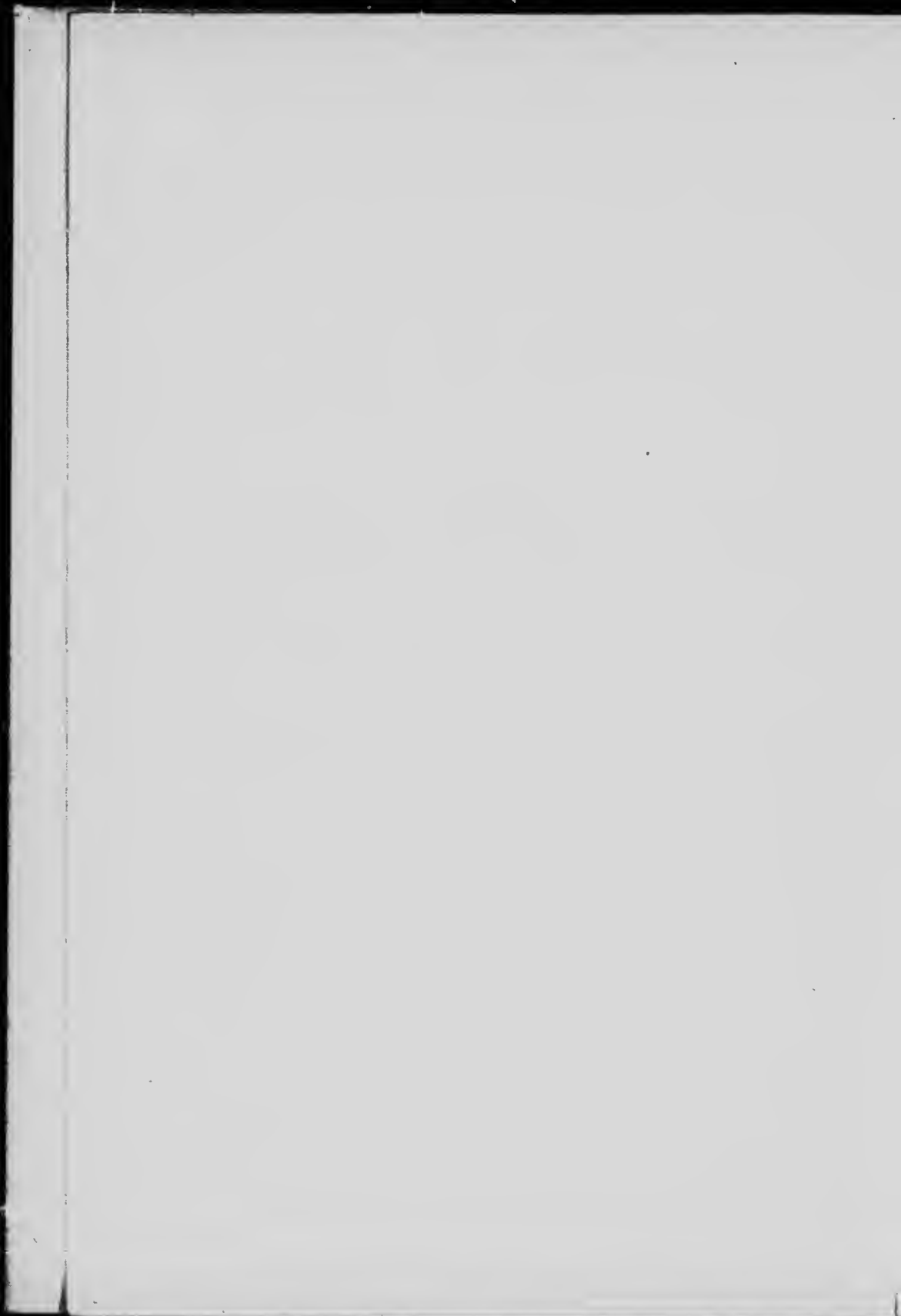
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AMATEUR DETECTIVE

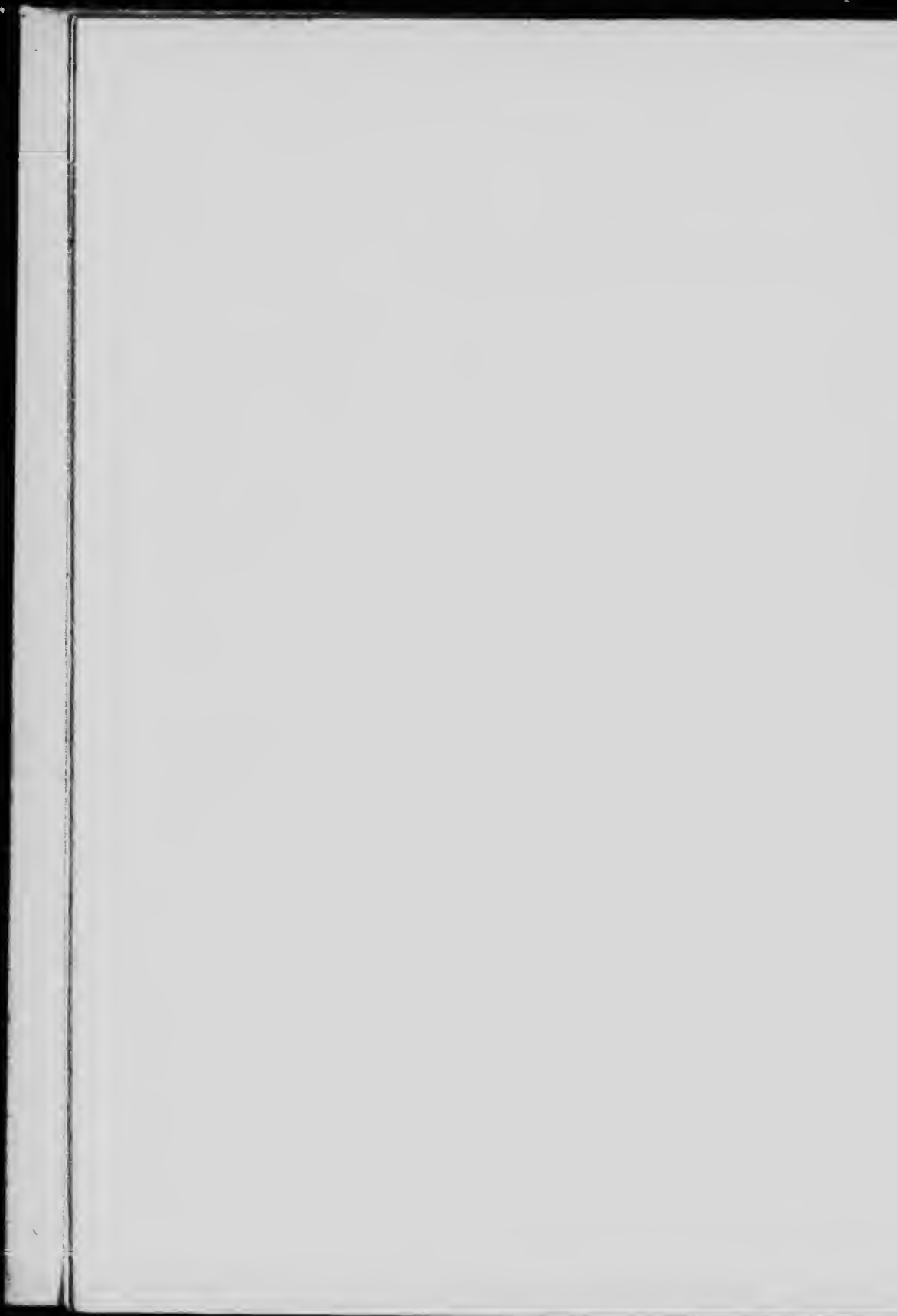
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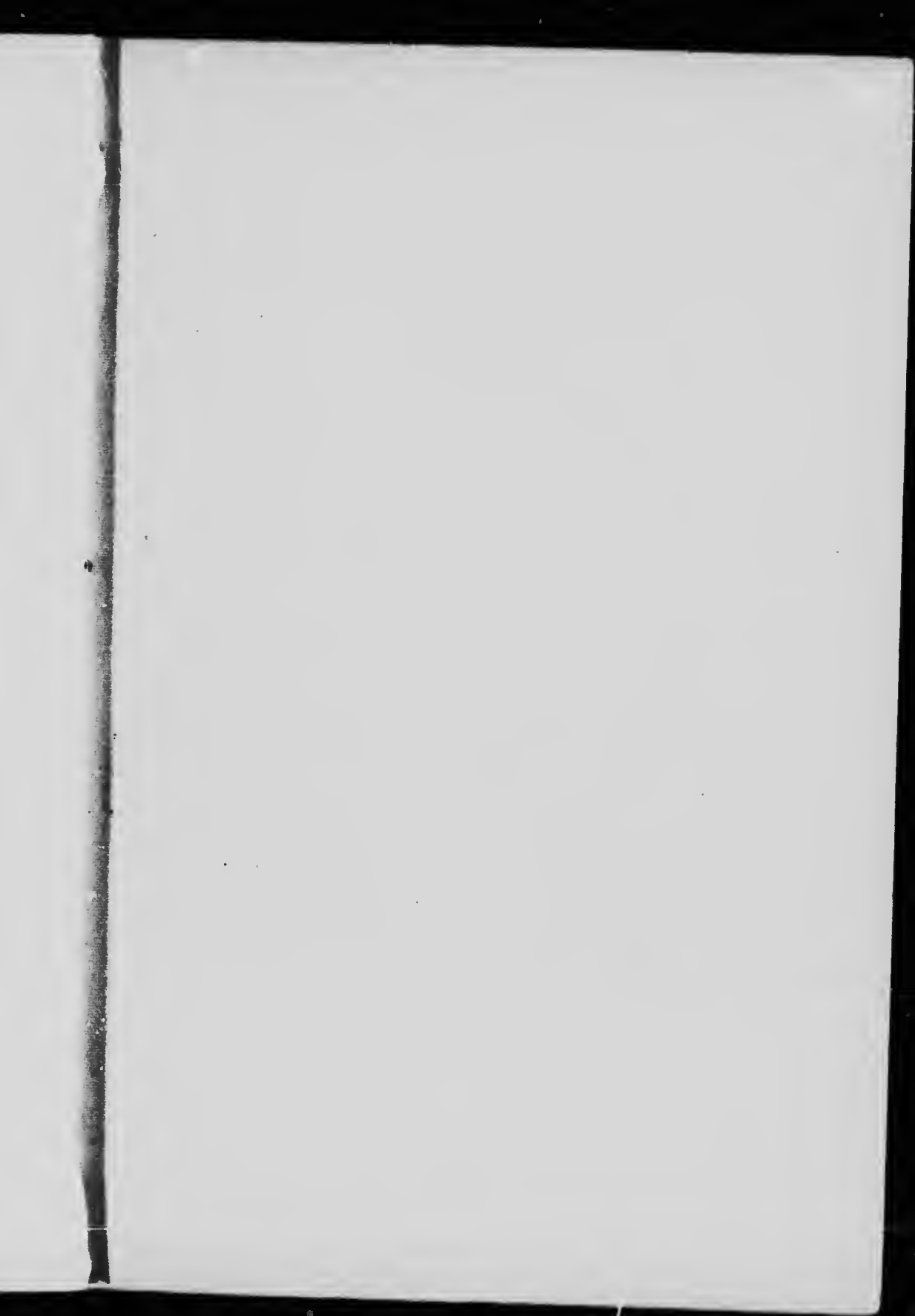
EDWARD H. HURLBUT





LANAGAN







**"TWO MORE SHOTS TORE THROUGH AND SPRAYED US
WITH SPLINTERS"**

LANAGAN

AMATEUR DETECTIVE

BY

EDWARD H. HURLBUT

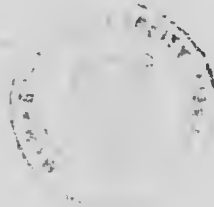
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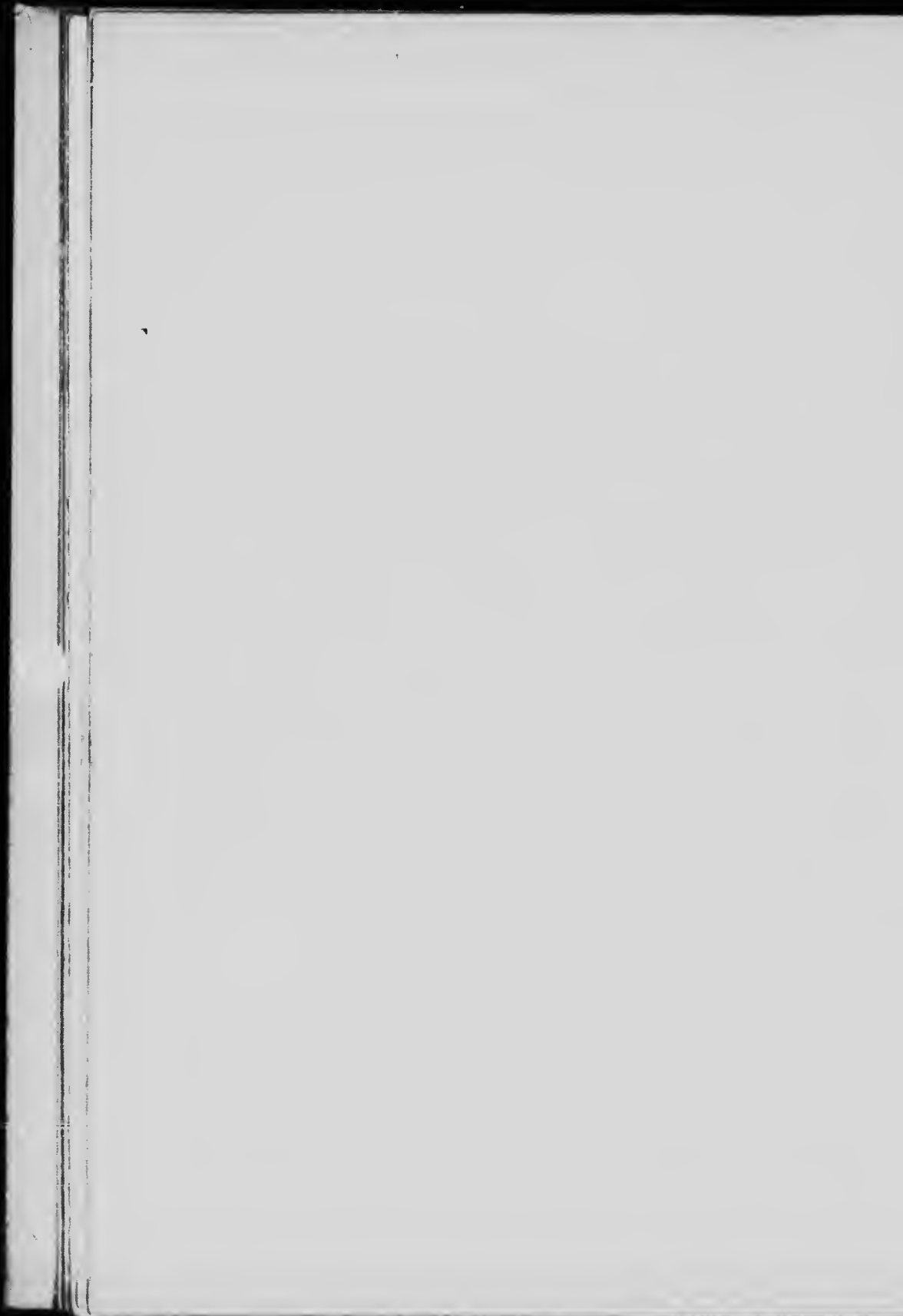
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ILLUSTRATIONS

FROM DRAWINGS BY
FREDERICK DORR STEELE

"Two more shots tore through, and sprayed
us with splinters" *Frontispiece*

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"Then Lanagan took his leisurely turn, drawing up an
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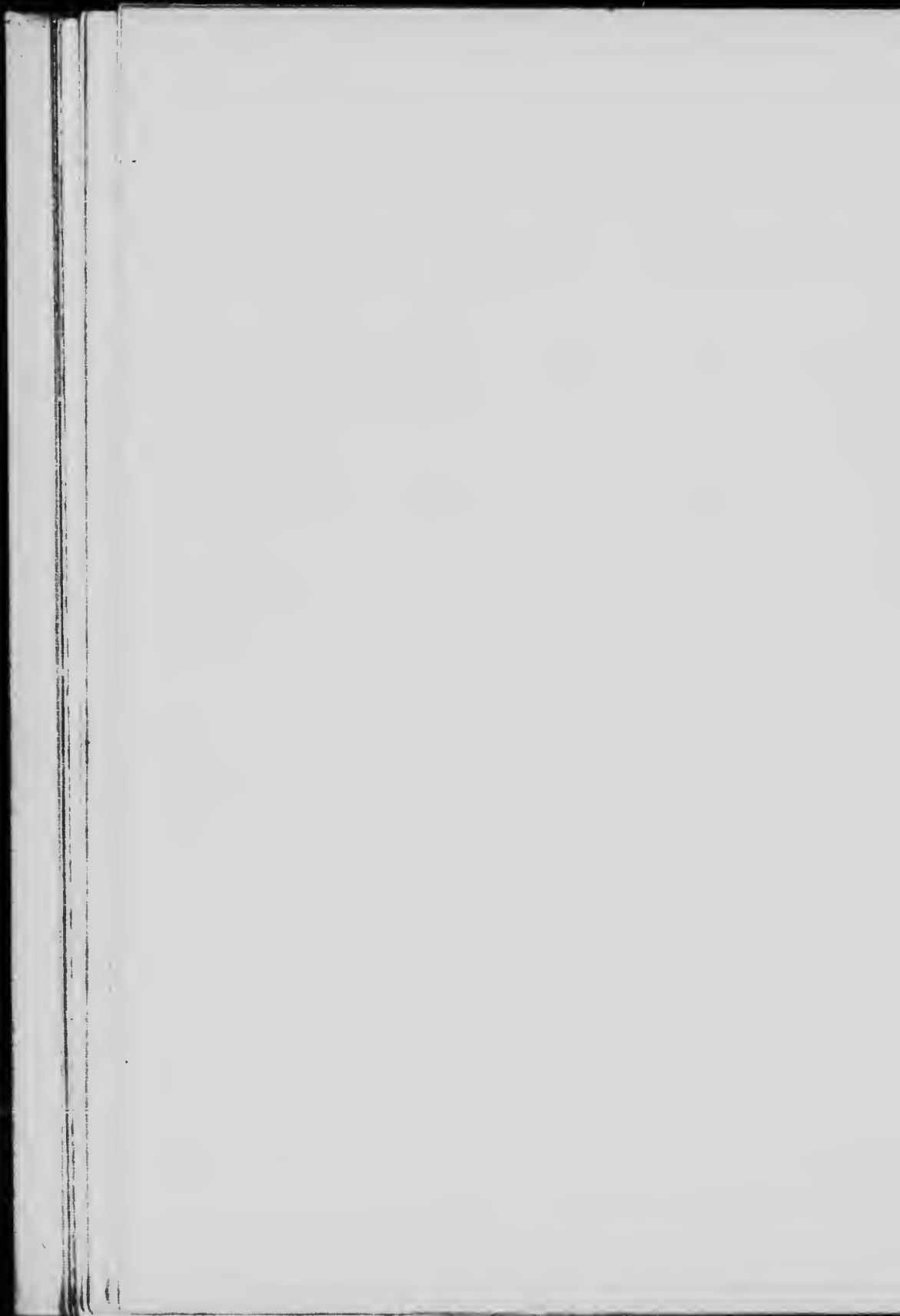
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10

LANAGAN
AMATEUR DETECTIVE

I
WHITHER THOU GOEST



I

WHITHER THOU GOEST

JACK LANAGAN of the San Francisco *Enquirer* was conceded to have "arrived" as the premier police reporter of San Francisco. This honour was his not solely through a series of brilliant newspaper feats in his especial field, but as well by reason of an entente that permitted him to call half the patrolmen on the force by their given names; enjoy the confidences of detective sergeants, a close-mouthed brotherhood; dine tête-à-tête in private at French restaurants with well-groomed police captains on canvasback or quail out of season, and sit nonchalantly on a corner of the chief's desk and absent-mindedly smoke up the chief's two-bit cigars.

It was an intimacy that carried much of the lore of the force with it: that vital knowledge not of books. Bill Dougherty on the "pawnbroker detail" knew scarcely more "fences" than did Lanagan; Charley Hartley, who handled the bunco detail, found himself nettled now and then when Lanagan would pick him up casually at the ferry building and point out some "worker" among the incoming rustics whom Hartley had not "made," and debonair Harry O'Brien, who spent his time among the banks, was more than once rudely jarred when

Lanagan would slip over on the front page of the *Enquirer* a defalcation that had been engaging O'Brien's attention for a week.

So it went with Lanagan; from the "bell hops" of big hotels, the bar boys of clubs, down to the coldest-blooded unpenned felon of the Barbary Coast who sold impossible whiskey with one hand and wielded a blackjack with the other, the police sources were his.

Consequently Lanagan, having "arrived," may be accorded a few more liberties than the average reporter and permitted to spend a little more time than they in poker in the back room at Fogarty's, hard by the Hall of Justice. Here, when times were dull, he could drift occasionally to fraternise with a "shyster," those buzzards of the police courts and the city prisons who served Fogarty; or with one of the police court prosecuting attorneys affiliated with the Fogarty political machine, for Fogarty was popularly credited with having at least two and possibly three of the police judges in his vest pocket. Or he could rattle the dice with a police judge himself and get the "inside" on a closed-door hearing or the latest complaint on the secret file; and he could keep in touch with the "plain-clothes" men who dropped in to pass the time of day with Fogarty; or with the patrolmen coming on and off watch, who reported to Fogarty as regularly as they donned and doffed their belts and helmets things they thought Fogarty should know.

In this fashion does the police reporter best serve his paper; for it is by such unholy contact that he keeps in touch with the circles within circles of the police department of a great city. Some he handles by fear, some he wins by favour, some he wheedles. In the end, if he be a brother post-graduate, the grist of the headquarters' mill is his.

Of the shysters there is Horace Lathrop, for instance, who boasts a Harvard degree when he is drunk — never when he is sober.

Horace is sitting with Lanagan at Fogarty's rear room table, while Lanagan sips moodily at his drink.

Larry the Rat, runner for the shysters, pasty of face, flat of forehead as of chin, with an over lip whose malformation suggests unpleasantly the rodent whose name he bears, shuffles in and bespeaks Lathrop at length. That worthy straightens up, glances at Lanagan, and then remarks:

"Casey has just brought in a moll," and arises, with elaborate unconcern, to leave the room.

"Well," drawled Lanagan, "what else?"

"Nothing. That's all I know. Going to try to get the case now, whatever it is."

"Is that all you told him, Larry?" asked Lanagan. The Rat mumbled unintelligibly and shuffled away.

"The Rat's answered after his breed," said Lanagan. "He says no, it is not. Now, Horace — pardon me, Barrister Lathrop — kick through.

You know I've got to deliver a story to my paper to-day. Come on."

Lanagan never wasted words with Lathrop. There were a few trivialities that he "had" on that individual. But Lathrop balked.

"Look here, Lanagan, all I got's her name and address. It isn't square. She may have a roll as long as your arm. You print this story, the newspaper men go at her for interviews, tip her off about me, she gets a regular lawyer, and where do I come off? You fellows are always crabbing our game. I gave you that shoplifter story a week ago and you played it for a column. You know you did, Jack; now you know you did."

Lathrop had been whining. Now he stiffened.

"I ain't going to," defiantly; "I'm tired o' being bullied by you. Aw, say now, Jack, it's a big case. And I got a wife and kids to look out for"—which was a fact—"and here you come taking the bread and butter out of their mouths. It ain't square, Jack; you know it ain't."

All morals to all men, reflected Lanagan, and laughed lazily, pulling a copy of the *Enquirer* across the table.

"See her, Horace? Right on this page — page one, column two, right here, with your name in big black-face letters — a little story of about one-third of a column on tha \$750 touch-off on that Oroville deacon, who went astray for the first time of his life and was pinched as a drunk — to be fleeced by you

and your precious band. There isn't any way of getting his money back, or proving a case against you or the two cops who cut the roll with you and Fogarty. I didn't print the story, but I've got the facts pretty straight; and it goes right here — right in this nice, conspicuous place for the grand jury to see and for that wife and those 'kids' to see also, who, singular as it may sound, actually don't know what particular brand of a 'lawyer' you are. Get all that?"

Lathrop "got" it.

Lanagan was then told that the detinue cells held a young woman of remarkable beauty, Miss Grace Turner, taken from a family rooming house on O'Farrell Street. Also that through Lathrop word of her arrest was to be taken to her brother there. Lathrop — or Larry the Rat, both being cogs in the same machine — had come by the information by the underground wire that runs from every city prison to the bail-bond operators and their shysters without.

Fogarty was the bail-bond chief, and possibly one of the plain-clothes men who just now rested his elbow upon the bar may have passed that name and address to Larry the Rat.

The "detinue" cases are those on the secret book at headquarters, that stable police violation of Magna Charta; the detinue cases, therefore, become the focus of the police reporter's activity.

"And incidentally, Horace, you stay away from

1153A O'Farrell Street until I get through," was Lanagan's final command.

"But what about Fogarty?" whined the shyster. "He must know by this time I got the case. You know what he could do to me if he wanted to, Jack."

"Yes, and I know what I could do to him if I wanted to, and he knows it, too," snapped Lanagan. "Leave him to me."

"I'm a friend of Miss Turner's," he said as the landlady opened the door at 1153A O'Farrell. "I wish to speak with her brother."

"He'll be glad to see you. He has been worrying. You ain't another one of them detectives? I didn't tell him, though. He was asleep and the doctor said he shouldn't be worried just now. It might be fatal. What did they do with the poor, dear girl?"

"Merely holding her for a few hours. What was the trouble?"

"Giving a bad check to the druggist for medicine. She did the same thing at the grocer's. It's a dirty trick, I say, to arrest the poor thing. Why, the grocer's bill was only a few dollars. They don't eat enough to keep my canary. The man eats mostly almonds. Something wrong with his stomach, and that seems to be all he can eat. Funny, ain't it?"

The garrulous woman led Lanagan to a doorway in the rear. He knocked and, in response to a feeble voice, entered.

Propped up with two pillows was a young man whose wasted features were bright with a hectic flush; whose arms, hanging loosely from his gown, were shrunk to the bone and sinews. The eyes were grey, steady, and assured; so much so that Lanagan half halted on the threshold as he felt the response in his own sensitive brain to the personality that flashed to him through those eyes. A man of mental power, thought Lanagan; of swift decision and of iron will.

The voice was little more than a gasp, but each word by effort was clearly uttered.

"You're an upper office man?"

"No. I am a newspaper man. Why did you ask that?"

"Because they were here and took my sister for overdrawing what little funds we had in bank."

There was concentrated fury in his weak voice.

"Sti'l I am curious to know how you knew they were plain-clothes men that took her?"

"How? A newspaper man ask how? Because they walk like a ton of pig lead. And didn't that cursed grocer threaten to have her arrested for a paltry four or five dollars? I heard her scream when they took her. This"—more quietly, with a slight shrug and comprehensive gesture to indicate his wasted form and flushed cheeks—"this particular complaint serves to strengthen our outer faculties for a while at least, even if it is at the expense of our inner ones."

"I take it your sister is bringing you from the interior to the South?"

"Yes. We came from South Dakota. We were robbed of our tickets on our first night here. She has been trying to get something to do to save enough money to get as far as Los Angeles. It came on me suddenly, alcohol helping. Sis stuck when they turned me out. On general principles, I don't blame father. I gambled a mortgage on to the old ranch and twenty years on to his head. Anyhow, here we are, Sis and me. That's what you fellows on the papers call a human-interest story, isn't it?"

There was something about the measured and sinister tone that told of the bitterness of a baffled strong man, in the face of a situation that he was powerless to avoid. Lanagan wondered what that man would have done — or tried to do — to him if he were in full possession of his strength. He judged from those level grey eyes that the session would not be uninteresting.

"Yes, it might be a human-interest story," said Lanagan, "and then again — it might be better than a human-interest story."

He was looking at the tip of his cigar, flicking the ashes from it as he said it; but he caught the swift, suddenly veiled flash that the keen eyes shot to his face. To all appearances, though, Lanagan did not see that glance. He had not liked the ready talk about upper office men; and he would take oath

that in the wasted features, round the ears and the neck, were the tell-tale traces of that prison pallor that requires many a long day to wear away.

"For instance," Lanagan continued, still flicking at his cigar tip, "if you were being kept under cover here?"

It was only a swift, partial intake of breath, but Lanagan caught it, and then the man spoke so easily and smoothly that the newspaper man believed himself deceived.

"Well, I am. That's a bet. But just until Sis can get me away; that's also a bet."

Then there followed details, the man on the pillows supplying with facility a pedigree that went back to the *Mayflower*. Lanagan had been fishing; yet as he left the room he was uneasy and far from being satisfied. As the story stood it was a neat little "human-interest" story — as Harry Turner had said — and worth a column and a half. He had comforted Turner to the extent of informing him that the shysters had his sister's case and would probably have her out before night. He drifted moodily back to police headquarters. There Lathrop met him.

"Nothing stirring," he said, disgustedly. "They've turned her loose. Grocer wouldn't prosecute. She's got a sick brother. Don't think she was a live one, anyway."

Lanagan ground one palm into the other. Three-quarters of the story was gone with the woman free

and his "hunch" was afloat without an anchor. He drifted into Chief Leslie's office and helped himself to a cigar.

"Chief, what did you have on that Turner girl?"

Leslie was past being surprised at anything Lanagan knew. He stopped studying a police circular long enough to look up. "Couple of little checks, but the complaining witness withdrew. I wouldn't write her up if I were you. She's one case entitled to sympathy. I talked to her. Thoroughbred, that girl; consumptive brother; taking him South. So I turned her loose."

Leslie fell to studying his circular again and Lanagan drew up a chair to look over the circular also, a little privilege he alone enjoyed of the newspaper men at headquarters. Then he whistled softly; Lanagan was past being surprised at anything — almost. That whistle was about his most demonstrative exhibition.

The circular was from Denver and offered \$5,000 reward for information leading to the "arrest and conviction" of Harry Short, wanted for highway robbery and murder. The details of a Denver crime that a brief time before had shocked the country were given and the customary police description, with the front and profile pictures from the rogues' gallery.

"Would probably be found with a woman," the circular read. "posing as his wife or sister." There followed a description of the woman, Cecile An-

drews, and her history. She was the daughter of a country minister who became enamored of Short when he did odd jobs about her father's place. She had refused to give him up when he was charged with triple murder. In some way, it was believed, she had managed to join him in hiding, for she had disappeared as completely as he.

Leslie finally became annoyed at Flanagan's prolonged whistle.

"Good heavens, Jack," he said irascibly, "I'm trying to get these descriptions in my head. Take that whistle outside."

"All right; but say, chief—" The tone was tense, drawn taut like a fiddle string. Leslie wheeled. Lanagan's eyes were lighting up with that curious brightness that flamed there when the strange brain of the man was at work, when there was action promised, when the tortuous mazes of some enigma were unfolding to that inner sight.

"Say, chief," he went on, "I wonder if I could make a trip, say to Paris, on about one-half of that reward? I've always had a curiosity to study that Paris police system. I don't approve of newspaper men taking blood money. It isn't in our game. But it might be proper to take about one-half of that money in a case like this for a trip like that. What do you think?"

Leslie's eyes were searching Lanagan's. He knew of old that Lanagan was not a quibbler and that he never wasted words.

"You've got something, Jack. What is it?"

"Him," said Lanagan inelegantly, tapping the face upon the circular.

Leslie jumped straight up out of his chair. The police reporter lit a fresh cigar from Leslie's top desk drawer, where the good ones were.

"It's this way, chief; but the story's mine, mine absolutely."

"You've brought me the tip, the story's yours. That's the way I play the game," said Leslie.

"This woman was the girl you arrested. Her brother's out in a rooming house on O'Farrell Street, laid up with consumption — galloping, too, it appears to me."

Leslie was an explosive man, and after a swift glance through the circular description of the woman again, he expressed himself volubly and with unction. It never occurred to him to question the accuracy of Lanagan's statements. He would have taken the newspaper man's word over that of one of his own men.

Lanagan telephoned to Sampson, city editor of the *Enquirer*, and before that cold-blooded individual could get in a word, Lanagan had said enough to indicate to Sampson that something choice was on the irons. Lanagan had asked for me, and I was detailed to report to him in thirty minutes at Van Ness Avenue and Eddy.

It was just thirty minutes later that the chief, Lanagan, Brady, Wilson, and Maloney — three of

Leslie's steadiest thief takers — and myself were dropping singly into 1153A O'Farrell Street, Lanagan having preceded us to reassure the landlady. Maloney went on through to take the alleyway, the room having a window over the alley. Softly and swiftly we massed before the door. Lanagan took the door, rapping. There was no answer. The chief signaled for a rush.

Leslie never carried but one gun, and this he now rested in the hollow of his left arm. He towered above and behind us as we noiselessly wedged against the old-fashioned, flimsy door. My heart was beating like a trip hammer. I never seem to be able to get over that thumping just before the opening engagement when I am elected to make a target of myself. I confess freely that I always went into those thrillers with Lanagan in the full expectation of getting my own name and picture in the papers, and the complimentary designation usually accorded a man of my profession by the paper he serves when mishap befalls him: "*A* reporter who was killed."

The chief breathed a soft command, the wedge crashed, the bolts burst, and we were in — an empty room.

There was an awkward pause, it seemed to me for an hour; it may have been but a minute, while Leslie slipped back into his holster that ugly gun of his. Lanagan was turning slowly, examining

every corner of the room. His eyes were living, snapping fire.

"I guess, chief," he drawled, "I won't make the reservations to-day for that little trip of mine."

The bed was unmade, but the room showed no traces of recent occupation save several empty medicine bottles from which the labels had been washed, and on a closet shelf a paper sack half full of almonds. There were almond shells on the floor. For the rest the room held but the ordinary appurtenances of a room of its kind; washstand, bowl, towels and rack, and cheap dresser.

The landlady was summoned. She was more surprised than Lanagan or the chief. She had not seen the girl return; had not seen the pair depart; had believed that the man was too sick to leave his bed.

Galvanic Leslie, within an hour, had men at the ferry building, at the Third and Townsend Street Depot, covering every boathouse that had launches or tugs for hire; the suburban electric lines were covered and the country roads leading south. The great mantrap that so easily can be thrown around the peninsula of San Francisco, the trap that time and again has caught the thieves of the world when they have fled for haven to the Western Coast metropolis, was set. And yet so quietly was the work done, so implicitly had Leslie impressed upon every district captain, every detective, every patrolman concerned with the story, the necessity for

absolute secrecy that not one of the other great papers of San Francisco knew that the jaws of that trap were gaping hungrily. Probably there was no reporter save Lanagan who could have broken into that story once Leslie had commanded his men to secrecy. They knew what disloyalty to that disciplinarian meant too well to trifle with him.

Within the city proper, plain-clothes men by shoals flooded every hotel and lodging house that might by any possibility harbour the pair. The hospitals were watched; half a dozen doctors known to Leslie worked among their professional brothers, but no one was attending such a man as Turner.

And the wonder grew to Lanagan that the story, scattered now well over the city, was even yet escaping the innumerable sources of news of the *Times* and the braggart *Herald*, to say nothing of the evening papers, the *Record* and the *Tribune*. In such fashion, though, by grace of newspaper luck, are the greatest successes scored after they have knocked around under the very feet of half the newspaper men of a city.

Of that army of plain-clothes men none worked harder than Lanagan. For days I did not see him. Sometimes I would locate him in the foulest sinks of the Barbary Coast or Chinatown. Here, with products brewed in some witch's caldron, he would be in fraternity, trying ceaselessly to tap that underground wire by which the convict bayed in a great city sends word to his kind. But always he failed.

"Kid" Monahan laboured in vain; "Red" Murphy, credited with knowing more thieves than all the coast saloon men put together, could secure no trace; Turner, or Short, had found no refuge in the hutches of the drug or the opium fiends. Lanagan met men who should have been in San Quentin; one night he crossed "Slivers" Martin, who had broken from a deputy sheriff and escaped a ten-year sentence.

Slivers was waiting until he could get out of the city. Yet even Slivers knew nothing of such a one as Turner. Finally Lanagan turned his attention to the residence sections.

At times he would drag me with him. For hours he would ramble up one street and down another, always trying the fruit stands, the grocery stores, the delicatessen stores, and always he asked one question: Did a blond young woman, with dark blue eyes, blue tailored suit, quick, nervous walk, come in and buy nuts, particularly almonds? A dozen times the answer was yes. And when the customer was not known to the proprietor, Lanagan would take up his watch, tireless, indefatigable, and wait until that person appeared or passed on the street. Always he met with failure.

Lanagan, always gaunt, became cadaverous. For four days I lost him. I worried and spent my nights trying to locate him, but his old haunts knew him not. One day there came a call for me.

"You, Norrie?" It was Lanagan's voice; it

sounded thin and tired. "I've landed. Come to Eddy and Van Ness. Got your gun?"

A quick shiver went over me. The climax had come. I borrowed Sampson's gun, having left mine home.

"Heard from Lanagan, have you?" asked that austere individual. I nodded. "Has he landed? Yes? Good luck," said Sampson, his eyes sparkling. He knew that Lanagan's pride, after the first fiasco, prevented his ringing up until the story was clinched.

"Give Lanagan my regards. Let us hear from you. It is not necessary to tell either you or Lanagan to do your best for speed."

Sampson, reckoned the coldest-blooded city editor in the West, was yet the most responsive to a story. He was a driver, but he knew how to humour men. I disliked him personally, and would avoid him out of the office, but in harness would have worked both legs to the ankle for him. Most of the men on his staff had that fanatical loyalty for him as a city editor; yet outside they seldom spoke of him save to damn. Curious breed, reporters.

To his credit as a city editor, in all of those two weeks he had not complained. He spoke about Lanagan to me only twice. He knew I was worried, and knew, I think, that I had spent many a night searching for him, finally to appear for work without sleep. But he knew that Lanagan was out

for the paper first, last, and all the time; knew that that bloodhound quality of sticking to the trail would never let him quit till he had proved that there was no way of landing the story.

Lanagan's appearance shocked me. He had not shaved for a week. Rings were under his eyes, reddened for want of sleep. His pale cheeks held an unhealthy flush and he coughed once or twice in a fashion I did not like, but that old magnetic smile was there.

"Scared as a rabbit, I'll bet, and wishing you'd insured your life first," he laughed, pulling me into a doorway. Then, more seriously, "Norrie, I'm just a wandering hulk, a derelict; whatever you will. My passing would be nothing to a soul on earth."

I had never heard Lanagan speak in that way.

"No soul on earth," he repeated.

Then he swept me with those luminous eyes of his, and they were as clear and as unclouded as my own. I knew that I had caught a swift glimpse as the shutter opened upon the vista of his past; that secret past that now I understood.

For a moment I was conscious of nothing save that this man whom I loved like a brother was in pain and I could do nothing for him. With his swift perceptions, Lanagan had caught my mood and our hands met; that lean, sinewy hand was as firm as steel. Then, with his facile art, he had thrown aside his humour of introspection and spoke briskly.

"Norrie, I don't want to tangle you with this against your will. This man, I believe, is the hardest game this city has held in my time or yours. He will die with his stockings on. It looks like gun play."

Frankly, I was for quitting, inwardly. Outwardly, because of that mesmeric way of his, that teasing, superior tone, I was all for the climax. Besides, I did not want to leave him to himself in that humour to go into a mess; I knew his reckless ways too well.

We walked rapidly up Eddy Street and turned on Franklin until near the corner of O'Farrell, where, entering a flat, Lanagan led the way to the top story. Here we entered an unfinished alcove room in the rear with a dormer window covered by a heavy curtain of burlap. The slightest possible rent had been made in the curtain. Lanagan told me to look. Opposite was a dormer window corresponding to our own, the next house being one of similar design. The alley between was possibly ten feet. Our window was the only one that could command the other.

In the opposite house the curtain was of ordinary heavy lace. After peering intently for a time, I could distinguish through it a woman's figure and a bed, upon which a form could be discerned.

"There you are, Norrie. That man shows his caliber by moving round the corner from his former home while the police look for him elsewhere. He

knows by now the police descriptions are here; that I must have recognised him, and that the hunt is on. My almond trail landed when I came back to this territory just on the final chance that the man was big enough to figure out that his surest safety lay right here. She has been out but a few times, buying those eternal almonds. Malted milk has been added to his diet, too. I picked her up, trailed her, and the rest was easy.

“The man’s stomach is gone. Incidentally, they owe a week’s rent there, and she is living mostly on almonds now, too; so I guess the exchequer is pretty low. I didn’t suppose there were any more women left in the world like that. This girl, born of good family, daughter of a minister, takes up with that triple-stained murderer and sticks. She surely took that honour and obey in epic earnest — if she married him; if not, why, the more credit to her for ‘ticking. . . .”

“It isn’t for us to judge, Norrie. Keep your eye glued to that hole while I go into the next room — I’ve rented this attic, by the way — and grind out copy.”

It was four o’clock then; at nine Lanagan ceased writing. He had made in longhand 6,000 words of as clean-cut, brilliant a narrative story of its kind as, under similar pressure, has ever appeared in print. As in all of Lanagan’s stories, it was “the police” who had learned this and that. Lanagan has made several detective sergeants in his time.

"Leslie will meet us here at one o'clock. We must keep the smash until two, fire the story at Sampson by telephone to lead off my stuff with; hold them in the room until three, and we beat the town again."

He hurried out to return in half an hour. He had telephoned to Sampson that the story would break about two o'clock and to hold the paper until he had heard from us; then he had sent his copy down by messenger boy and loaded up on a bundle of the choicest of the rank brand of Manilas he chose at times to affect. I noticed as he lit a match that his hands shook. I wanted him to lie down until one, but his only answer was to fix me with those eyes of his, glowing like a cat's in the darkness (we were smoking with the lighted ends of our cigars held inside our hats, so careful was Lanagan lest any trace be given to the opposite room), and he laughed that curious laugh of his.

"When this is over, Norrie," he said, "I'll sleep for a week. Half that \$5,000 is mine; you and Leslie and the others can divide the rest."

Really, I saw Lanagan in my mind's eye already snooping and prying around those Paris byways; it sounded too assured as he said it. I wondered whether I cared for blood money; figured that I would accept it, and began pleasantly in the gloom to spend my "bit" with much contentment. I concluded I would accompany Lanagan on that Paris trip.

One o'clock came, and with it Leslie, Brady, Wilson, and Maloney. Brady was put at the aperture. A faint light in the opposite room brought the two figures out into bold relief. The rest of us moved to the outer room, where the plainclothes men slipped their revolvers to their side coat pockets. I wished lonesomely that I had brought two and that I might feel braver, although I had as much chance of shooting a revolver with my left hand without disaster as of sailing an aeroplane with either. At that I believe I would have felt more in the picture with two.

The plan was to pull a fire alarm, and as soon as the engines clattered into the street, scatter to the top story, rap on the door as if to warn the occupants, take them off their guard when the door was opened, and the thing was done. That programme was carried out. When the apparatus swung up from O'Farrell, filling the still night air with those strident bells of terror and alarm, we sped to the top floor and made the corridor.

"Fire! Fire!"

It was Brady's hoarse voice; and even I thrilled, it was done so realistically. I, as the one most likely unknown to the pair, had been selected to take their door. I rapped loudly and shouted the alarm. Brady was on one side of me, Lanagan on the other. Wilson, Maloney, and the chief on either side again in the dark hall, flattened to the wall, guns drawn ready for the rush. The door opened six inches:

a startled, wan face with lustrous blue eyes, shining vividly above deep circles of black, looked into mine through the aperture. Possibly something in my face, possibly native suspicion and fear, induced her to essay to slam the door. I pushed my shoulder to the door and shoved, Brady at one shoulder, Lanagan at the other. She gave back with one more wide-eyed look that went over my shoulder and caught the grey-bearded chief, known to her, huddled back for fear of that very thing.

There came one shrill scream: "Harry! The police!" and she had turned and fled and we pushed in vain — the door was chained! One united crash again, the fastenings gave just as the slight figure, quicker than a swallow, had darted within the inner room and slammed the door shut in our faces. A bolt shot to place as a bullet from within tore through the panelling and clipped the rim of Brady's hat, and that towering figure bore back out of range and swung us in a mass with him. Two more shots tore through and sprayed us with splinters. We flattened against the wall.

"The jig is up, Short; you may as well come out."

It was Leslie, calm as if he were delivering orders to his chauffeur. A shot rewarded him, impinging perilously close to his shoulder. The man within was dying with the convict's last desperate ambition to take a policeman with him. We dropped flat. There was a pause, while Brady and Leslie coun-

elled in whispers whether to risk a rush. The silence became acute, punctuated now and then by whisperings from the inner room.

It sounded as if she were pleading with him; his note of finality could not be mistaken, although the words were not heard. Another silence, and then to our straining ears, rising clearly above the din and clamour of doors below stairs opening and shutting, of shoutings and excited cries, came a trembling voice floating through the jagged holes of the inner door — trembling with the strength or the ardour of a determination rather than any dread or fear:

“Then, Harry, take me, too! Take me, too!”

“No, Cecile, no!”

There was silence again from within; and again that voice, now touched with pleading still more earnest:

“It is only right, Harry dear; all that the world held I sacrificed for you. If you don't take me, I will follow you!”

Prolonged to acuteness became the silence again; the man's voice, hoarse, gasping, finally came:

“Pray, Cecile.”

And again that voice, trembling, yet clear as the beautiful sweeping chords of a harp, came floating with the acrid revolver smoke through the jagged, ugly rents in the panelling, and seemed to flood the room with something almost like a visible radiance:

“Our Father, who art in heaven!”

I saw Maloney, his blue-nosed revolver in hand, half risen, make the sign of the adoration, touching his forehead and his chest with that grim muzzle. Leslie stood slowly upright, his massive head sunk into his breast. Lanagan breathed hard and deep. It was awesome; we were held in the spell of that strange and extraordinary occurrence. On that beautiful voice went to the end:

"And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen."

"Amen!" echoed the murderer's choking voice.

"The door! To save her!"

It was Leslie's electric whisper, and at his signal we crashed with our united strength. With the crashing came two shots, and I caught Lanagan's harsh curse at my ear and his swift mutter: "Too late!" The door gave.

She knelt with her head fallen upon her clasped hands, just as she had knelt in that final prayer, beside the bed. He was lying back upon the pillow.

There was no dry eye there. Veteran thief-takers, men who had stood with their backs to the wall and death baying them a score of times; men who would risk the billy or knife or gun as blithely as they would go to their morning meal; to whom suffering and violence and death were daily allotments, bowed themselves before the melancholy end of that misguided girl.

Yet possibly, for her, it was better so.

It was Lanagan's voice that brought me back.

Lanagan, answering the newspaper call, with the dominant newspaper demand still strong upon him and over him; Lanagan, quick with instinctive thought for the high-strung, chafing Sampson down at the *Enquirer* office and the press waiting for the release gong; Lanagan, the genius of his craft, asserting once again his incomparable newspaper superiority to me, still dreaming the precious seconds away at the pathetic fate of that poor piece of clay kneeling there; Lanagan, crisply as a colonel in the field, snapped:

“Scatter, Norrie, for a 'phone!”

II

THE PATHS OF JUDGMENT



II

THE PATHS OF JUDGMENT

JACK LANAGAN had a Sunday off, the first in weeks. A man of whim and caprice in his leisure moments, he had made no plans. This Sunday morning, after idly reading the morning papers, rolling and consuming innumerable brown paper cigarettes meanwhile, he finally sallied forth in his ill-fitting clothes toward the Palace grill and breakfast. And this being luxuriously ended, he was laved and shaved to his heart's content. Then, perfumed like a boulevardier, he issued forth into Market Street to join that morning throng drifting down toward the ferry building for the institutional Sunday outing across the bay. He permitted himself to drift with the current, perfectly and vastly at ease with all the world. He had switched from cigarettes to an evil Manila, poisoning the air cheerfully for yards around him. Lanagan rather enjoyed the exclusiveness given him by his noisome cigars.

Rourke, Fleming, and little Johnny O'Grady of the *Herald*, with a camera man, whirled out of Market Street in an automobile, and Lanagan jerked alertly round to watch them out of sight, speculat-

ing as to what the story might be. He had half determined to drift over to the office, when Truck One swung into Market Street from O'Farrell. Other fire apparatus was swinging into and out of Market Street, clanging stridently, and Lanagan turned again to the ferry. Fires interested him but little. Always the chance, he remarked once to me fastidiously, of some chump of a fireman squirting water all over you, which spoiled your clothes. I never knew whether Lanagan was having a quiet joke in that or not. His entire wardrobe would have been scorned by a rag picker.

He had been puffing his oakum industriously, and now was attracted by the spectacle of a man beside him nearly doubled over with a fit of coughing. He was shaking and beating at his breast with large, bony hands, and Lanagan noted professionally the rheumatic knuckles and the nails like claws, yellow and dirty. His breath came in sharp whistles, short and staccato, and he was taking possibly a third of a normal respiration at a time.

A particularly violent paroxysm, followed by all evidences of entire suspension of breath, brought Lanagan to the man's side with a leap. He swung the huddled form against a hydrant.

"Here you!" he called, to a passer-by, "call Douglas 20 and tell them to shoot the harbour ambulance up here." To himself he said: "This man is sick. He needs attention and needs it quick."

But at the words the hunched, choking figure

straightened spasmodically, flashing a look upon Lanagan that Lanagan, used to malevolence in all its forms expressed upon features the most evil, had not seen quite equalled. Accustomed to the ill-featured and repulsive as they strain through the bars at the city prison, yet even Lanagan started back momentarily in revulsion.

"I have seen misers," thought Lanagan, "but this is the real miser of all fact and all fiction. I would know him in a million. Fellow I used to see in my dreams when I was a youngster. Pneumonia sure. About six hours for him and then six feet."

Thus lightly diagnosing and disposing of the man and his case, Lanagan motioned the citizen, who had meantime stopped, to go on with the call. But the strange, gnomelike figure, flashing another look, a singular blend of loathing, hate, fear, and timidity, upon the newspaper man, started to hobble away. Lanagan dropped his hand on the man's shoulder to restrain him. But the harsh features turned a look so glowering and repellent upon him that he withdrew the restraining hand. The coughing had ceased. The little old man was still breathing sibilantly and swiftly, rather like a panting dog or cat, which he suggested, but by extraordinary effort of will had fought away the more violent exhibition of his seizure. He commenced to shuffle down the street, with one furtive, fearful, backward look that went on past Lanagan and up Market Street.

"You need a hospital, man," said Lanagan

curtly, "and I'm going to take you there. Wait." He placed his hand again on the man's shoulder. But the manikin-like creature flung the hand viciously from him and again flashed that strange look of blended hate, fear, and timidity upon the newspaper man.

"Let be!" he grated. "Let be!"

A car clanged to the safety station. The grotesque figure, still half-hunched over at the paroxysm from Lanagan's Manila, started for it and Lanagan made no further effort at detention. He climbed laboriously to the platform, and Lanagan shrugged his shoulders.

"I certainly am not going to dry-nurse you, old man, but I ought to at that. If I ever saw a man marked for death, you're that man."

Despite a long afternoon idled away beneath mine host Pastori's shade trees and the somnolent influence of cobwebbed Chianti, Lanagan found his miser's features constantly before him.

"He's my miser, too," he mused, in the vernacular of childhood. "I shouldn't have let him escape me after finding him."

Returning late, Lanagan for once in his life went to his room without his inevitable last call at police headquarters. Consequently he was several hours late in the morning on the news of a very fine police story when he awakened to find his miser — Thaddeus Miller of Oakland — pictured on the front pages of all the morning papers. There was no

mistaking that face. It was his miser. He had been murdered in his cabin, a clumsy attempt having been made to fire the cabin to destroy the crime and its evidence.

A young clerk, a neighbour to the miser, was under arrest. It appeared that the clerk, James Watson, was found named in the will as sole legatee to an estate valued at close to a quarter of a million dollars. Upon the Watson porch had been found a hammer, freshly washed, the handle not yet dry. But clinging to the claws, unobserved by whoever had washed the blood from the hammer, were two strands of white hair that brought the hammer home to the crime in the cabin. Watson, the stories related, had only known Miller for a few months. He had been seen leaving the cottage shortly before eight o'clock. The fire was discovered smouldering at nine-thirty o'clock, extinguished, and Miller found with his skull crushed, lying on a kerosene-soaked bunk, to which, fortunately, the clumsily started fire had not yet communicated.

Watson had made a bad case out for himself initially by denying that he had seen Miller at all that day or knowing that he was named in the will. ~~Water~~ confronted by neighbours who had seen him ~~leaving~~ the cottage and one neighbour who had ~~heard his wife speak of the will, he took refuge in~~ ~~statements~~ that he had denied everything through ~~fear~~ and terror. He then admitted owning the ~~hammer~~, but professed himself at a loss to account

”
for the fact of its having been freshly washed and of the strands of gray hair.

Raving his innocence, he had come to the verge of physical collapse. He repeated constantly the name of his wife and begged the police to bring her to him. But he was being held in strict “detinue,” the papers said, until the third degree was given him. At the time of going to press confession was expected momentarily.

Mrs. Watson, after a police examination, had been permitted to return to her home. Her story was that both she and her husband had befriended Miller on different occasions, out of pity for his forlorn and miserable condition. She admitted that on one occasion he had jocularly remarked that he would not forget her husband in his will, but had attached no importance to his remark. She had never heard him speak of any person that he feared. She admitted that her husband had visited Watson at his cabin in the evening, but that the circumstance was not unusual. He had remained but a moment, Miller being in an unusually morose mood — had been so, in fact, for three or four days. She was at a loss to account for the condition of the hammer.

“And yet,” growled Lanagan, “I’m eternally doomed if I think either of them did it. That fellow gave me a look that spelled fear; abject, abnormal fear; it was the concentration of the fear of a lifetime of a hare who runs with the dogs always

at his heels. And it was not fear of the Watsons either."

Lanagan, stopping at the office only long enough to receive instructions, made the narrow-gauge ferry by bowling over an obstreperous ticket-taker who tried to shut the gate in his face. Not that there was any particular need for such spectacular haste; it was merely Lanagan's way; Lanagan "showing off," as some of his professional brothers would invidiously have it. But I, who knew him better than any news writer in the business, say not. Lanagan was a genuine eccentric. And in this particular case he was fighting for time. Bitter experience had taught him the value of minutes. Indeed, a cardinal rule of his business that Lanagan sought to drive into my slower newspaper intelligence was to get on the ground first.

Lanagan knew of old that every city editor in town would be accepting the very plausible police version, and would be awaiting the expected confession from Watson. Watson might confess, but Lanagan had a sullen "hunch" that he wouldn't.

Lanagan moved most of the time by "hunches," as many successful newspaper men — to say nothing of detectives — do. Hunches and luck may be called by such fancy brands as inductive or deductive, intensive or extensive analytical capacity; but in the long run most crimes are solved on luck, hunches, and through the invaluable aid of police "stool pigeons," more politely known as "sources."

An intuitive judgment of men is about as good an asset as a reporter or detective can have, coupled with a faculty for quick decision and personal bravery.

More than any one thing, it was possibly this faculty for swift intuitive analysis that carried Lanagan to his high degree of success. However, man and man's judgments are fallible; it was so ordered in the original scheme of things, for very obvious reasons.

Lanagan went directly to the Watson cottage. The brilliant American police system had permitted some scores of curious and morbid persons to trample over every inch of ground within a hundred yards of the Miller hut. Privileged friends of the patrolman on guard there, after the traditional American custom also, had been permitted to slip inside and paw over the belongings and stare to their hearts' content. Lanagan knew of old what the situation there would be. That could wait. He was more concerned with having the first meeting of the day with Mrs. Watson.

It was a modest little "bungalow style" of home that he approached, much like that of any one of thousands of small-salaried men in the transbay suburban sections. An air of good taste, neatness, and care in the trim little lawn, the cleanliness of the walks, stairs and porch, and the precision with which all of the shades were drawn against the morning sun, marked it possibly a bit more in-

dividual than many of its kind. Mrs. Watson herself opened the door to his ring. She bore the outward evidence of grief. Her eyes were red and swollen, her cheeks hectic, her hair disheveled. She was blond, with large blue eyes, set possibly a line too closely together, chiseled nose, delicate, shapely ears, saving the lobe was not quite as free as an exact taste would require, and a well-moulded chin.

"I am Mr. Lanagan of the *Enquirer*," he said, adding some words of apology. He had a way with women — and with men as well — when he so desired, that was singularly ingratiating; a soft trick of speech, an ingenuousness of manner, a certain dignity that seemed to lift him from the mean atmosphere of his ill-fitting clothes and marked him with personality.

"You may come in," said Mrs. Watson.

As he followed her to the parlour and she lifted the shades, he noticed that she was of good figure, rather lithe in her movements, laced well in for a housewife unappareled for the street, not more than three-and-twenty, and that she walked with that scarcely perceptible lift of the shoulders and swing of the hips that denotes a woman not entirely unconscious, even in the stress of melancholy circumstances, of the gaze of a man; a suggestion of affectation, the unmistakable mark of a woman inclined by temperament to be naturally frivolous; or even, upon occasion, reckless. He noticed, too, that she wore French heels.

"Curious type certainly," commented Lanagan mentally. "Sort of a domesticated coryphée; with the homing instinct implanted where the wanderlust was planted in her sisters. One who has settled into marriage where her like settle, with as little concern, into the round circle of the night lights. Everything different except that generic vanity. Rather an odd mating for a clerk, and a plodder at that, to judge from his picture," thought Lanagan.

Lanagan sat with his back to the window, putting Mrs. Watson in the full light.

"Is there anything you can say, Mrs. Watson, that could throw any light upon this affair? Any enemies that Miller ever spoke about? Any visitors that he has had of late? Any letters or other messages that he received? Any threats?"

She threw both hands forth with a despairing gesture.

"Nothing, nothing!" she moaned, as tears came. "It is terrible, terrible! He is innocent, innocent I say! I know he is innocent! I know it!"

She sobbed for a moment, and then, with a sudden gesture of determination, straightened up, dried her eyes, and composed herself.

Lanagan had been watching her with eyes that seemed to narrow and lessen to little black beads. His ears, gifted with abnormal power for receiving and disintegrating into each component shade of meaning or emotion the tones of the human voice,

drank in every word that she uttered, marked each sob that shook her form.

"You do not believe your husband guilty, do you?"

Her lips parted in an exclamation of protest, and Lanagan for the first time caught the upper lip; a lip as thin as a paper cutter, that drew tautly and white across the perfect teeth. It suggested a knife to Lanagan.

"She holds true to the type," he commented to himself grimly. "A curious type, surely, for a prosaic clerk!"

Lanagan's brain was churning. His beady eyes gleamed as though touched with phosphorescence. Under the concentration of his gaze, the woman unconsciously shrank. Rising from his chair with a movement almost tigerish, he strode before her, upturned her face so that her eyes looked straight up into his, and then, his voice terrific in its tension, and yet scarcely louder than a whisper, said:

"Did *you* wheedle Thaddeus Miller into making a will in your favour and then murder him?"

So quickly that her act seemed rather involuntary than by any conscious impulse, she leaped to her feet, her breast rising and falling tumultuously. She struggled inarticulately for speech, raised her hand as though to strike him in the face, and collapsed in a swoon at his feet.

Lanagan gazed coldly down upon her without qualm. He was impersonal now, the incarnation

of newspaper truth. He only regretted that she had balked him by swooning. Swiftly he straightened her out, loosed her collar, and was busily engaged chafing her hands when heavy footfalls sounded from the porch, and the bell rang loudly.

"By the brogans and the ring, our friends of the upper office," commented Lanagan cynically as he opened the door. Quinlan and Pryor from the Oakland department entered, viewing Lanagan suspiciously as they beheld the still form upon the floor.

"She's in better shape for the hospital than your third degree in the detinue cells," remarked Lanagan, vouchsafing no explanations. "Went out just this minute as I was interviewing her."

Quinlan and Pryor settled themselves heavily, lit fresh cigars, made laboured notes of the circumstances, and, when Lanagan finally restored the woman, gave her some breathing space and then informed her that she was to be taken to see her husband. To Lanagan she directed no look — addressed no word. She moved as one in a trance.

The detectives and their prisoner departed and Lanagan turned for the Miller cottage.

"That was a pure soul's denial or it was a guilty soul's defiance," thought Lanagan. "But which?"

Long he turned that over.

"Frankly, on type I mistrust her; but what about that look in Miller's eyes?"

Lanagan seldom went back on a "hunch." At

first flash he had declared the Watsons innocent. He was not yet ready to abandon that; and yet the circumstances were certainly trending toward them.

"But," he concluded, "there's a nigger in this woodpile somewhere that I haven't located."

The cottage had nothing to offer. Police, curio hunters, and shoals of newspaper men had combed it. Lanagan hurried to the Oakland police headquarters and cocked his feet on Inspector Henley's desk while that astute individual detailed to him the various steps taken by the police in fixing the crime on Watson. Lanagan was nettled. It sounded highly convincing.

"You're sure of Watson?" he finally asked, quizzically, helping himself to a fist-full of Henley's cigars.

"Clearest case I have ever handled," said Henley, moving the cigar box out of reach. "Every link is complete. Further: the woman is in on it and we'll have her within twenty-four hours. We'll get the case before Baxter and they'll swing inside of three months."

"Well," drawled Lanagan, "you're wrong again, Henley."

The inspector flushed. He had a lively recollection of how Lanagan had "trimmed" him on the Stockslager murder and he didn't take kindly to the "again."

"We've got the motive, the property; and the means, the hammer. What more do you want?"

"Well, to complete the alliteration, I suppose you want the murderer," said Lanagan with a faint laugh. "And you haven't got him. Pretty good smokes. Just slip back that box. I don't get over your way very often. You act as though you had paid for those cigars yourself. Can I see Watson?"

"No," said Henley, surlily. He never cared to argue the little matters such as Lanagan was fond of nagging him with; some way he had a feeling that Lanagan always knew just a trifle more than he told. He passed back the box. "But it's an even break. Nobody's seen him. Here's his picture."

Lanagan studied the front and profile of a young man of twenty-six, a face of surprising frankness and honesty. Every line held to Lanagan's critical eye the lie to the number striped across his breast; another feature of our brilliant American police system that puts the rogue's gallery blazon on a man before he is tried.

As Lanagan passed out, his eye fell on the bulletin board in the detectives' room. The last discharge slip from San Quentin was pasted upon it, the slip by which all police stations are supposed to keep in touch with prisoners discharged during the past month. But through long familiarity few of the detectives stop to read carefully. More from habit than anything else, Lanagan read those sheets as a preacher reads the book — he scanned it.

The fifth name on the list caught his eye: Ephraim Miller, alias Thad Miller, alias Thornton Miles, alias Iowa Slim; assault to murder; twenty-five years. The slip was dated the first — five days back. There was little chance of its being read now. Swift as a lightning flash Lanagan had formed his theory. His mind leaped back to the meeting with Miller in front of the Palace. Ephraim and Thaddeus; they were old-fashioned names. Then there was the "Thad."

Miller had been from San Quentin but four days: Miser Miller's fear had been on him but a few days. Possibly this was a wayward son, some unrecognised offspring, some family skeleton recrudescing; perhaps it was this convict who had brought that fear into the eyes of Thaddeus Miller!

It was a long, fine chance; but the most brilliant of newspaper successes are scored on long, fine chances. Lanagan determined to take it. He "rapped" to the hunch, as he used to style it; under the impulse of his new idea he was a human dynamo.

He was back in San Francisco within an hour, and headed straight for Billy Connors' Buckets of Blood, that famed rendezvous within a stone's throw of the Hall of Justice, where the leaders of the thieves' clans foregathered. There he waited an hour until "Kid" Monahan, popularly designated as King of the Pick-pockets, came in. The Kid was now a fence. He had retired from the

active practice of his profession after doing time twice. "Ain't there with the touch any more," he remarked sadly to Lanagan one day. He was, moreover, credited with being the man for an outsider to "see" who wanted to operate locally.

"Kid," said Lanagan, "I want you to find me Ephraim Miller, alias Thad Mills, alias Thornton Miles, alias Iowa Slim. Just out of San Quentin where he did twenty-five years for assault to murder."

"We don't keep no line on these old ones," retorted the "King" professionally. "But if he's goin' to report here he reports to me. It's pretty hard on us native sons with that reform bunch on the Police Commission and the sky pilots stuffing you guys on the papers full of knocks. There ain't no touch-off work bein' done around here by any travellers that we can help. When do you want him?"

"Meet me here to-night at ten. I must have him located by then."

Lanagan had befriended the "King" once, and he held that illustrious gentleman's absolute loyalty. He knew the "King" would have a dozen men out in as many minutes.

Lanagan headed back for Oakland to round up the loose ends of the story. He found police headquarters jammed with newspaper men and the smell of many flash powders heavy on the air.

"All right, Mr. Lanagan of the *Enquirer*," quoth Henley. "You can talk to Watson now." His tone was triumph.

Watson had confessed. He was sitting in a chair in the Inspector's room, a huddled figure of misery. The mantle of age seemed to have settled on him overnight.

Lanagan was a hard loser. He stepped over to the huddled man.

"Do you mean to tell me, Watson," he said so low that no one but Watson heard him; "do you mean to tell me that you are not lying, putting your neck in the noose — to save your wife?"

"No! No!" the denial was a shriek. "I killed him! I killed him for his money, I tell you!" He fell back, shivering.

Lanagan drove in on him. "You lie, I tell you," he hissed. "You lie! You fool! It's bound to come out! Tell the truth!"

"No, no," moaned Watson. "I did it alone. God! I can feel his skull crunching yet!"

"You've got more imagination than I credited you with," sneered Lanagan savagely. "That last was a good touch."

There was a hustle as Quinlan and Pryor came through the prison gates from the detainee cells surrounded by an eager coterie of newspaper men.

"We've got her, Inspector!" cried Quinlan with unprofessional feeling. "She's 'spilled.' Killed him herself, and says her husband is lying if he says

he did it. They're both in it. We will have the whole thing now."

The woman was then brought out after her official statement had been taken. Nothing that the newspaper men could do could shake her story. In substance she said that she had worked on the old man for months to have the will made out in her husband's favour. Knowing her husband was above such a deed, she planned and executed it alone. She had not had an opportunity to wash the hammer after she returned home, and only did so when the furor commenced. That was why it was still damp and why she had overlooked the two strands of incriminating gray hair.

The newspaper camera men snapped and exploded flashes; the inquisitorial circle broke up, and Watson having been removed, the room was cleared of all save Henley, Mrs. Watson, and Lanagan.

"Through?" asked Henley sarcastically.

"No," snapped Lanagan. "You say you killed this man. I say, Mrs. Watson, you're a liar. You no more killed that man than I did. You are lying to save your husband!"

His voice had risen; his aspect was fairly ferocious; his sallow face flushed to an unwholesome grey-blue; his eyes glowing again with that catlike phosphorescence that she had seen and quailed at once before.

But again he was doomed to disappointment at a breakdown, for again under the shock she collapsed

after half rising to her feet with evident purpose to give him the lie as violently as he gave it to her.

Women, Lanagan reflected, are like electric wires. They are drawn to carry just so much voltage. A little overplus and they burn out. Each time he had bullied the woman just as her nerves were at the breaking point.

The matron bustled in with a side compliment on Lanagan for his brutality, and lifted the limp form. Lanagan, bitterly chagrined at the events of the day, turned on his heel to return to San Francisco. On the ferry he broke a vow of six months and fell back on absinthe. He reached the office at seven o'clock, wrote steadily for two hours a story identical as he knew it would be with all the morning papers, and then went out.

The word was passed swiftly that Lanagan was drinking again, and I was released for the night to round him up and get him home — my usual assignment under the circumstances.

On the chance that some of the choice spirits that foregather at Connors' dive might have crossed his path, I dropped in there, and, to my unbounded relief, saw Lanagan himself at a table in deep conversation with "Kid" Monahan. I went over to his table, the "King" slipping out the side door. I had not Lanagan's penchant for camaraderie with that breed, and took little pains not to let him know it.

The old wild, reckless light shone from Lanagan's

eyes, and I knew there was no measuring his stride that night, making pace or keeping it.

He laughed aloud. "Art there, old true-penny?" and slapped my shoulder. He was in high feather with himself, that was clear. "Come. Have you got your gun?" I nodded.

"That's fine. Now for the grand 'feenale,' as Cæsar says about his *ponce à la toscana*. And success to all hunches!" There was something besides absinthe burning back in those eyes.

Questions were useless, so I trailed along. At Macnamara's corner we picked up Brady and Wilson, two of Chief Leslie's trustiest men.

"Did the chief instruct you?" asked Lanagan.

"He said to report to you and keep our heads shut or tend daisies," replied Brady, the senior of the pair, and a cool and heady thief-taker; also the champion pistol shot of the department.

"My man is Iowa Slim, wanted for murder. Is heavily armed and desperate. He's in the Tokio — Jap lodging house at Dupont and Clay. It looks like break the door and rush. Wilson, Norton, and I will take the door, and you, Brady, stand free of the rush and be ready to drop him if he shows fight. That is, Norton will —" turning to me in his quiz-zical, bantering way, "— if he relishes the job!"

I didn't relish the job. But, as usual, when he spoke to me in that superior, teasing way I blundered in valiantly where my native caution would have feared to tread. I am free to admit that I am

of that branch of the profession that believes a reporter full of lead in peace or war is of very little use on earth, and certainly not elsewhere, to the paper that employs him.

In the shadows the detectives nonchalantly slipped their revolvers into their side coat pockets. Neither was cumbered by an overcoat; double-line your sack coat, the old-timers will tell you, but keep away from excess encumbrances where possible. One gallant officer in my time lost his life because he was two seconds delayed unbuttoning an overcoat for his gun.

Fifteen minutes later we assembled, one by one, at convenient corners to the Tokio, a foul-smelling, ramshackle affair. One by one we drifted in, slipped off our shoes and tiptoed up the stairs, Lanagan in the lead, Norton bringing up the rear.

Lanagan paused before a corner door. He and Wilson braced against it. My bulk backed Wilson. Brady towered above us, standing free to have a clear sweep with both guns. He turned the light on full, taking every chance of making targets of us all for the one chance of getting a drop on Slim without bloodshed.

From an adjacent room a clock ticked loudly; somebody rolled over in bed, and the sounds came so clearly that it seemed my heart must have beat as loudly as a trip hammer. Yet it was not exactly fear, as I recall it; it was a sort of nervous tension to have it over with if it had to come.

"Slim! Slim!" It was a soft, sibilant whisper, and I could scarcely believe my ears. It was Lanagan at the keyhole. Then he rapped four times in quick, soft staccato, and then four times more. It was some code he had learned, possibly from Monahan.

There was a prolonged pause, and the sound of someone from within turning in bed, and another long pause. The strain on me was terrific. From the corner of my eye I caught the black muzzle of Brady's left-hand gun. It was as steady as though held in a vise, and I had time to marvel.

"Slim! Slim! They're after me! It's Larry Bowman's pal, Shorty!"

Another nerve-racking pause, and then at the very keyhole came through a soft, throaty whisper:

"Who?"

"Shorty Davis. Larry said you'd take me in. Quick, Slim, they're after me!"

A key grated, the knob turned.

"Now!" hissed Lanagan, and with one mighty lurch we burst pell-mell into the room. I caught a flashing look at a slender, flannel-shirted figure with a week's growth of beard as Slim whirled a foot ahead of us and with one leap cleared the room and swung with a murderous long-barrelled Colt in his hand.

His leap was quicker than the spring of a cat. He shot from the hip, but Brady, posted to do just the trick he did, spoiled the shot. Slim's bullet

ripped a two-inch hole through the floor as he crumpled down in a heap.

We stretched him upon the bed. He had got it in the lungs. Wilson started for the doctor.

"Remember," said Lanagan, "the chief's orders. You are not to talk. If it gets out, tell all reporters it's a detainee case. I'll answer for the rest."

A few gnomelike, corpselike, yellow faces peered from doors, but a flash from Brady's star sent them scurrying back. The shot was apparently not heard in the street, for no one came.

Lanagan turned to Slim, who was choking.

"You know what you were wanted for, Slim?" he asked in as cool a voice as a surgeon might ask for your pulse.

"That Oakland job, I suppose," he gasped.

"Well, boys, you did me a good turn croaking me. I never wanted to go back to that hell hole again. I did what I came out to do, what I've waited twenty-five years to do, and I'm ready to take my judgment. He sent me up there twenty-five years ago, and he murdered my father as surely as there is a God, who will some day dope it all out right according to a different scheme than they do here."

Gasping, with many halts, he told his story. The surgeon came, shook his head, and devoted himself to keeping life until the story was taken down.

His father, a wealthy Iowan, had come to Thaddeus Miller's ranch thirty years ago, bringing with him his entire fortune for investment. The son

Ephraim remained at school back home. At Miller's ranch the boy's father had been found in the well one day, drowned. A whiskey bottle floated on the water beside him. His entire estate had been willed to Thaddeus Miller. In a sparsely settled community Thaddeus Miller's story had been accepted — that the brother, in drink, had stumbled into the well. The son had journeyed across the continent to find himself disinherited. He had always been told he was to be his father's heir. His father in Iowa had been a strict abstainer. So far as the son knew, he had never touched liquor. But his charge, that Thaddeus had in some fashion gotten his father intoxicated, forced him to sign a will, and then pitched him into the well with the bottle, while it created some natural excitement, could never be proved, and in the course of time became forgotten. In spite of a contest, the will stood.

Ephraim took to drink and fell in with evil companions. For petty offences he was sentenced and earned his name of Iowa Slim. One night in liquor, fired with his wrongs, he determined to ransack Miller's house. He knew the old man kept a large amount of money concealed there. It was his, he believed, and he determined to have it. Miller had caught him. In the scuffle he beat his uncle and left him for dead, and in the stovepipe he had found a bag of gold. But as he was leaving the grounds, neighbours, driving along on the lonely country road, who had heard the first screams of the

old man, surrounded him. The uncle prosecuted him with all the wealth and influence at his command, and the son, at the age of eighteen years, was sentenced to San Quentin for twenty-five years for assault to murder.

As sentence was pronounced he had turned on his uncle and warned him that the day he was freed from prison he would come back and kill him. From time to time he had managed to send threats by discharged convicts, who carried the word with the unfailing obligation of the convict brotherhood. He had driven the old man from place to place.

He had lost track of him for an entire year, and was planning how best to locate him again when he unexpectedly met him face to face on the streets of San Francisco, followed him to his home, waited until the neighbourhood was quiet, and then had stolen in, wakened the old man from sleep, and asked about his father's property.

Under the fear of death Miller had made a promise of restitution, but in an unguarded moment he said he "would make a new will." Slim demanded what he meant by a new will, and the uncle had confessed the will to the Watsons merely to cheat the nephew in case he had come back and fulfilled his courtroom threat. The uncle had kept count and knew to a day when Slim was to be released. Enraged beyond endurance at that, Slim had seized up the hammer and crushed the old man's head.

"But as I live," he breathed hoarsely, "the man was as good as dead before I hit him."

"Yes," Lanagan interrupted, "I know that, Slim."

Slim looked at Lanagan with dull curiosity, but was too far gone to ask explanations, and he continued with his story, telling of sprinkling kerosene and touching it with a match. He then had gone to the Watson cottage, carrying the hammer, intending if the couple were not in to locate and destroy the will; and if they were to do double murder if necessary to get it. Miller had said they had it, an untruth, told evidently in the childish hope that Slim might leave him and search for it. While still waiting for an opportunity of entering the house, the smouldering fire had been discovered at the Miller cottage, and he had fled, the thought coming to him to leave the hammer on the Watson porch, not knowing the hammer belonged to them and had been borrowed by Miller. The arrest of the two for murder might pave the way for him to have his property restored as the next of kin to Miller.

He signed the confession laboriously, and the story was done.

"It's all right, cull," he said to Brady, dropping back to the vernacular. "You did me a good trick not sending me back. There ain't no hard feelings on my part."

He raised himself by a sudden effort, his eyes

peering far, far away and beyond the sordid scene of his dissolution.

"I squared — all — accounts — dad — I squ'—"

He dropped back on the pillow. The surgeon bent his head to Slim's breast, then slowly straightened up and drew the sheet over his face.

"Poor lad!" said Lanagan softly. "They will judge you differently there!"

Then again the newspaper mind curtly:

"Brady, you and Wilson stay here until I come back. Nobody gets in. Nobody, understand? Doc, we'll have to impound you, too, until three. Understand, Brady?" Brady nodded.

"Now, Norrie," snapped Lanagan incisively, "beat it, boy, beat it!"

For two hours Lanagan and I fed paper into our typewriters, with Sampson himself whisking the sheets away as they came from the platens. The M. E. even came in once or twice and tried to preserve his dignity while he scanned the copy hot from the typewriter.

The thrill of Lanagan's great exclusive was throughout the entire plant. Not a half-dozen people in the office knew just what the story was, but each knew by the subtle instinct of communication that the big scoop of the year was shooting down the pneumatic to the composing room.

Not until we had the first papers, sticky and inky and fragrant, in our eager fingers, did we stir from

our desks. Then followed the usual jubilation as the scouts ran in with the *Times* and the *Herald* with the "Watsons Confess" scareheads.

Ah, that is life, that exaltation of the "exclusive"!

We wandered leisurely down to the Tokio. The story was wide open now. We were through. The morgue notified, Brady and Wilson stayed to attend to the routine, and Lanagan announced that he was going to Oakland.

We caught the paper boat, riding luxuriously on heaps of *Enquirers*. Thus it happened that we were at police headquarters there with the copies of our own paper before the route carriers had made their deliveries. Lanagan stepped to the 'phone and rang up Henley.

"Feel like buying a drink?" asked Lanagan.

Over the wire came back some hearty and measured compliments. "You're sure in an amiable humour. Well, come down. You've got two prisoners to free. If conditions at your jail weren't so rotten I wouldn't say anything till morning. But I need a drink, which is on you, and the Watsons need a breath of fresh air." In fifteen minutes Henley was with us.

He was a gallant officer, that Henley. When he had finished he wrung Lanagan's hand until I thought he never would let go.

"Bring in the Watsons," he ordered.

In a moment they came in, a weary, worn, misery-marked couple. It was their first meeting since their imprisonment. With a sob, asking no why or wherefore, Mrs. Watson fell into her husband's arms and mingled her tears with his. Her sobs — weary, worn, tired little sobs — echoed softly under the vaulted ceiling.

"I am pleased to inform you," Henley said grandly, "that through the efforts of our brilliant young friend of the *Enquirer*, the murderer of Miller has been located. You are free."

Then followed such a scene of hysterical gladness and tearful, joyous explanations as Henley's room, that had beheld many strange and unusual scenes, had never witnessed.

Of course Watson, when arrested, confronted with the hammer and told that his wife had confessed, had yielded to the third degree and, unable to accept the full horror of it, yet had swiftly formed his plan to confess to save the woman he loved, even though she might have done the deed.

She, on her part, told a similar story, had formed her plan, for it appeared that when the furor was raised after the murder was discovered she had found the hammer on her porch with fresh blood stains; knew it had been in Miller's cottage, and had washed it hurriedly, not knowing in her excitement just what to do, her husband even then having been taken to the scene of the crime by the police.

In face of his confession and her own hammer found stained in such manner, she had actually believed that he had committed the crime.

The police automobile drove up and the Watsons were escorted to it.

For the twentieth time, her eyes still tear-filled, Mrs. Watson said: "What can we ever do to thank you, Mr. Lanagan?"

"Forgive me certain brutal conduct," laughed that individual. "As I hope the Lord will forgive me," he added *sotto voce*, "for misjudging you."

As the automobile sped away to return a very happy couple to their home, Lanagan, hat doffed and in hand, bowed profoundly after the retreating machine, and remarked with veneration to the world at large:

"The tenth woman, gentlemen, the tenth woman."

Then to Henley: "Inspector, I believe you said something about buying?"

III
THE CONSPIRACY OF ONE



III

THE CONSPIRACY OF ONE

“**K**IND of caught you fellows off base, Norrie.”

Bradley, star man for the *Herald*, crawled it at me invidiously as I entered the police reporters' room at the Hall of Justice. Mertiman of the *Times* and a half-dozen morning paper men, their copy turned in, had drifted down to the room to await any late developments. The Matto story had been on for three days and the *Herald* and the *Times* had “put over” the arrest of Bernardo Tosci, Camorrist, at the expense of Lanagan and myself.

“Better shoot a few absinthe drips into Lanagan,” continued Bradley, “and then maybe you'll land something. He's been sober so long he's lost his grip.”

Bradley had fared hardly at the expense of Lanagan on more than one occasion. I was about to fling it back at him when Lanagan's voice interrupted me. He had entered the room unforunately just in time to hear Bradley's words.

“Possibly,” he said.

There was an embarrassed pause. Lanagan had a caustic tip to his tongue and they awaited it now. He studied Bradley without expression, leaning

against the door sill. But, curiously enough, there was no outburst. It was always difficult to foresee just what form Lanagan's humour would take.

"Charley," he said at last to Bradley, and there shaded into his voice a subtle colouring of unconscious pathos, "What have I ever done to you? I have never done you dirt; nor any man in the business dirt. I have played the game square. Why is it that I am always singled out like that? Have I ever betrayed my paper or my friends? Have I ever brought dishonour to the name of the newspaperman? If I have drunk, it has been out of the public sight.

"I have fought hard, Charley; fought hard to break the habit. It belongs to a past day in our game. And irrespective of that I may wish to be remembered around here some day as something other than drunken Jack Lanagan. I can't help it if I have a knack of landing stories. I've got to play the game right with my paper, haven't I? And here in this reporters' room of all places I thought for a little lift and a hand along and you are trying to shove me down."

His voice hardened in bitterness:

"I've played a lone hand all my life, though, Charley; it seems to be in the cards that I keep it up."

My eyes blurred because I alone knew how hard he had fought that battle. Beneath his cynical exterior he had a soul as sensitive to slights as a girl.

Boyishly I made a lunge at Bradley, but Lanagan, with a swift move, had my arm in that lean, powerful hand of his.

"It don't go," he said, softly. "We are full grown men."

There was an awkward pause. Then Merriman, of few words, said sententiously:

"It's your move, Charley."

And Bradley put out his hand, which Lanagan took.

"Jack," said the *Herald* man, "I'm a cad. There isn't a righter man in the game than you."

"Forget it then," said Lanagan. "I have."

But as we left the reporters' room together I noticed that the whiteness that had come over Lanagan's face remained there.

"Don't let it worry you, Jack," I said anxiously.

"Don't you bother, laddie. He did me more good than liquor, and I never felt the dragging for the stuff worse than to-night. I'm going into this story now for fair, and I'm going in to smash the *Times* and the *Herald* flatter than a matrix."

The Ratto case was one that occupied considerable public attention several years ago, interest arising in the first instance through the peculiar manner in which the crime was disclosed. Ratto, a wealthy Italian commission merchant, had disappeared, no great commotion being raised for the first few days. The police made the customary desultory "search" — the "search" consisting mainly of the name and

description of Ratto being read out at the watches in the various station-houses. The mystery in the disappearance might have remained unsolved for weeks had it not been for a lineman, Waters, who, perched on the cross-tree of a telegraph pole commanding a view of the windows of a room in the vacant house where Ratto's dead body lay, made the discovery. No policeman being in the vicinity, Waters, with residents of the vicinity, entered the house.

There had followed much newspaper speculation and police deduction. The Mafia and the Camorra came in for attention, the latter organisation being one that was at that time — long before the Viterbo trials — just coming to the attention of the American regular police and the secret service, as counterfeiting of American currency formed one of the Camorra accomplishments.

The peculiar interest in the manner in which the Ratto killing was discovered was this: three months previously a crime had been discovered under almost identical circumstances by the same lineman, Waters. In that case Rosendorn, a Jewish tailor, was found after a several days' disappearance by Waters, at work on the lines, who happened to see the body as he glanced through the window of a vacant house from his elevated perch. Following the discovery of the body by Waters the case had been speedily cleared up by the police and proved to be an affair arising from conjugal jealousy.

Waters was a man well advanced in years. The strain of the appearance at the coroner's jury and the preliminary hearings in the police court appeared slightly to unbalance his mind. The spectacle of the murdered man that he beheld through the windows of the vacant house was constantly before him. He was a man who had gone through a placid life and never figured in any scene of shocking violence or of murder.

After the disposal of the Rosendorn case Waters became possessed of a mania for climbing telegraph poles commanding the windows of vacant houses. Here and there and everywhere about the city he might be seen spiking himself up a pole, peering intently, and scuttling down. He was a familiar figure to all policemen and many citizens. He made a practice of haunting police headquarters, and, his imagination beginning evidently to visualise the first scene, once or twice led futile parties into vacant houses with the declaration that he had discovered a body. The police reporters humoured him and he came to know the most of them, particularly Lanagan, who found Waters' case was of profound interest. Several stories were written about him and his self-appointed cross-beam task of discovering murdered people in vacant houses.

And then — he "made good." Weeks of poking and prying and shinning up and down telegraph poles brought their reward and Waters discovered another crime: that of Ratto. He had been slain

with an ordinary blackjack, which was found by the body.

During the three days of excitement following the discovery of the commission merchant's body Waters thrived upon the publicity that he received. He carried bundles of papers containing accounts of his "find" and with his picture taken in many ways: climbing up telegraph poles, peering into a window from a cross-tree — a camera man nearly lost his life slipping on a cross beam taking this picture, and as he looked ten years ago, his last "gallery" picture unearthed "exclusively" by a proud "cub" reporter. He was as tickled as a boy, and it was confidently predicted around police headquarters that he would find an end in an insane asylum from pure joy in a month.

But the Ratto case did not clear up quite as easily as had the Rosendorn case. It will be recalled in San Francisco that a swift night ride in the police launch to Black Diamond had resulted in the arrest of Bernardo Tosci, claimed by the police to be the leader of the Camorra in the west. A police theory of attempted blackmail by that organisation seemed to have been well bolstered up. The local ramifications of the Camorra were proved beyond all doubt. Mysterious persons, suspected of being Camorra agents, who had been seen talking to Ratto shortly before his disappearance, were being diligently sought. The fear of the Camorra by the residents of the Latin quarter seriously hindered

the police and newspaper men in their work, even the native-speaking Italian detail of upper officemen making little progress against the terror that the shadow of the Camorra threw upon the quarter. Police and newspaper judgment were slowly settling that Ratto's death was due to one of those far-reaching conspiracies of the Camorra chieftain and his minions.

Such was the situation at midnight when Lanagan and I dropped out of the reporters' room. The arrest of Tosci — that we had been "scooped" on — had been made shortly after midnight the night before. A sullen "hunch" on Lanagan's part that the crime was in no way reminiscent of the methods of the Camorra, as he understood those methods from a mass of inquiry and first-hand reading, had led us away from the police headquarters just a few moments before Tosci had been slipped up the back elevator and placed in detinue. The man regularly assigned to the night police detail at the Hall of Justice, a new man on the "beat," had missed the arrest, working against seasoned men on the *Times* and the *Herald* with their inside sources of prison information. However, we were supposed to be doing the "heavy" work on the story, so the burden of the "trimming" fell upon us.

Lanagan was morose. He had nothing more to say as we walked down Kearney street and turned up Broadway. I thought he was going to Cæsar's — the original Cæsar's with the two tables and the

marvellous cuisine that pioneered the way for the glaring café chantant of to-day's slumming parties, — but he walked rapidly past Cæsar's and on to turn in at Bresci's, a short distance up the slope of Telegraph Hill. It was a dirty little place, one of the corner "wine joints" sprinkled thickly in out of the way pockets of the congested Latin quarter. At Bresci's, in addition to the bar, there was a little eating place at the rear, separated from the bar by dingy curtains. One room further back held a piano, where on occasion one might hear his ash man, or the flower vendor from Third and Market streets, or a waiter off duty from the downtown cafés, volume forth the Prologue or swing faultlessly through the Toreador's song.

"Just got a tip that they are trying to hook mine host Bresci into the thing as a Camorra leader," was all that Lanagan said.

We sat at one of the tables while Lanagan pulled the faded curtains almost together. Madam Bresci, she of the famed sauté mélé, was indisposed, so the daughter, Bina, would serve us, if agreeable? Perfectly so, said Lanagan, rather with a note of satisfaction it struck me, though when I glanced at his face in some surprise, for he was a man who was ordinarily unmoved of women, it was expressionless.

Bresci went on to his bar after giving orders at the kitchen, and we sat there some time in silence; long enough for Lanagan to send the nicotine of three evil Manilas to his lungs. I saw that his eyes

never left the opening through the curtains. Then his cigar, from his mouth for the moment, was suspended in air on its travel back and I followed his sharp glance through the curtain.

Dinoli and Alberta, two plainclothes men detailed in the Latin quarter, had entered the saloon. Instantly the babble from the voices of many volatile Italians ceased. The saloon on the moment became quiet, save for the rattling of glasses and one click of the old-fashioned maplewood cash register. The detectives passed the time with Bresci, casually "sized up" the gathering, missing Lanagan and myself, and left. Instantly there broke forth a riot of sputtering Italian. The word "Ratto" we heard and then, obviously at some motion toward our curtains from Bresci, the babble stopped as suddenly as it began and within five moments the throng had idled out and the saloon was still.

"Bresci," demanded Lanagan suddenly, "what were they saying out there about Ratto? Were they Camorristis?"

Bresci's hand went straight over his head.

"*Corpo di Christo! Non! Non!*" he exclaimed, paling. "Oh, never speak such word here! Non! They say, too bad Ratto he keeled!"

He mopped his brow of its perspiration, suddenly started, and glanced furtively through the curtains to see whether anyone had come in and heard the conversation.

"I think you're a liar, Bresci," said Lanagan

pleasantly. "But as I can't talk Italian, I can't prove it. It's pretty funny how that pow-wow shut up the minute those coppers blew through that door. But you better wipe your streaming brow again and beat it back to the bar. You've got a customer. Who is —" Lanagan whispered to me as Bresci left, "no other than Lawrence Morton of the secret service, just assigned here from Seattle."

Then he continued, "I met him the other day on that counterfeiting story at the beach. Just a shade curious, I should say, the attention Bresci is attracting to-night from the big and the little hawkshaws. It bears out my 'tip.'"

Morton had a drink or two, complained of being tired, and drifted casually over to the curtains, opened them, saw us, and was backing easily away when Lanagan called out from the darkness — he had turned off the incandescent earlier:

"Come in, Morton. Nothing to get exclusive over," switching on the light.

Morton dropped into a chair. If he was perturbed at being "made" he did not show it. He was generally reputed one of the two or three cleverest operators in the government service.

"That was good work you did on Iowa Slim, from all I hear," he vouchsafed.

"There's a better coming up," replied Lanagan, indifferently. "What brings you to Bresci's?"

Morton shrugged his shoulders.

"You know the two rules of our department?"

"Guard the president and turn up counterfeiters," said Lanagan.

"Well, Lanagan, you've got the cachet to me from a good friend. The secret service man loses his job who talks; but I don't mind taking a chance with you and telling you in confidence that in this particular case I'm not guarding the president; being as he is, as you know, in Washington."

"Haven't been sampling any — er — *salami*?" drawled Lanagan.

Morton laughed. "You sure are a clever one at that. No. I haven't come across any that suited my palate. I'm particular."

We had a *café royale* — with Lanagan pouring his thimble-full of cognac in my glass — and Morton left.

"The Camorra, it develops," said Lanagan, "have been shipping to this country from excellent counterfeit American bank notes. They ship them in *salami* sausages. Maybe if one has gone astray we will get a slice of bank note with our *salami* and *saute*, for here it comes on a tray with the fair Bina serving."

Bina, Bresci's daughter, was an Italian of absolute beauty; one of those glowing faces and perfect forms you see in the old Italian masters.

I noticed in a moment that the comely Bina had much attention to show Lanagan. We finished our meal and Lanagan led the way to the inner room, where the piano was located. I had heard him at

different times sputter out "rag," but when Nevin's "A Day in Venice" suite came breathing softly beneath his finger tips from out of that wrangly piano I could but listen in amazement. Man of mysterious beginnings, he had dropped into the San Francisco newspaper game over night, been given his "try-out" by the brotherhood, found to speak the language of the tribe, and had thereafter been unconditionally accepted. Such a mess as the Bradley affair only served to emphasise his leadership.

With the last fine chord of the *Buona Notte* there was a stillness broken only by the instant and ecstatic handclapping of Bina. If I ever saw the thing called Love shine forth from the human eyes, it suddenly illuminated those dusky eyes that moment.

"O Madonna! Madonna!" she cried, softly. "Encore! Encore!"

Lanagan zipped through a lustspeil, to drop back then to the Last Composition. It was truly remarkable, the manner in which he brought the encroaching blindness of the great Beethoven sobbing out of the misery of the minor base.

"Did a lot of that sort of thing when I was younger," he said, apologetically. "Before the wanderlust hit me."

He was through. Bina fluttered about him and Lanagan's head was close to hers. She was a full-sexed creature but young; and I balked. I spoke to Lanagan sharply after a moment or two and we

departed. She gave him a shy little glance as he left.

He laughed. "What a Covenanter you are! A psalm singer gone wrong for fair!"

"I don't like it," I said, stubbornly, but with the best of intentions. "She's only a child." I didn't yet know all the sides of this man Lanagan.

He whirled on me: and I got a swift sense of the power that could flash from those dark eyes, and I felt, with the intimacy of personal experience, how effective they must be when working upon a guilty mind.

"Let me tell you, Howard," he bit out, using my given name for the first time in our friendship, "Norrie" being his ordinary salutation, "that I'm working on the Ratto story. Get me? What do you take me for, anyhow? I've stood one welt from my own kind to-night and I don't want another."

Lanagan received his second apology of the night; but he didn't appear to want it at that. His uncanny faculty of reading men's minds seemed to tell him that my remark was in good faith.

"Forget it," he laughed. "But just for that, Norrie, I'll keep to myself for the present the interesting bit of information that Bina gave me; for Bresci is a Camorra agent after all, and Bina, who is all eyes and ears, knows precisely the truth about Ratto's death in so far as it pertains to the Camorra. I guess that will hold you for a while? But what



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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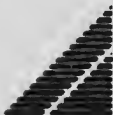
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a lover of music she is! Let's call it a day. Don't look for me to-morrow. I'm off on a little lay of my own. Keep in general reach of a telephone so I can get you in a hurry and give that slavedriver of a Sampson my distinguished compliments and tell him I will show up when it pleases me to get d— good and ready."

I hammered away at the routine of the story the next day — I was just a plain plodder, ordinarily dependable, but never particularly brilliant — and neither saw Lanagan nor heard from him. A lively angle was given to the story when Dinola and Alberti discovered, concealed in one of Ratto's game refrigerators, six choice *salami* sausages that his death had evidently prevented him disposing of in the proper way, for neatly rolled in a half-inch wad in the dead centre of each, was a roll of ten \$100 gold bills of U. S. currency.

The secret service men, apprised, raged at the information being given to the press, claiming that they had been working to round up the entire gang for months, and that the publication would serve as warning to the others. But Leslie, more concerned with solving the Ratto mystery, and hanging it on Tosci than with handling Uncle Sam's minor details, and being also a great believer in the assistance intelligent newspaper publicity could be to the police, gave the facts out. The facts would appear to link Ratto indubitably with the Camorra ring engaged in the importation of counterfeit currency and obvi-

ously eliminated the Camorra blackmail theory with respect to his death.

With Ratto now definitely established as a leader of the slippery Camorra — it was a hard organisation to get definite proof on — the police were thrown back on a theory of a fight between Camorra leaders, possibly over some division of the profits or some breach of faith. The Camorra history shows that it was not — nor is not — slow to take vengeance even on its own people.

Lanagan was missing the next day again, and I was surprised, in view of the sensational developments. I was following the police lead and it all pointed to the Camorra to me. Nor did he appear for work the third day nor give me word of himself. And on this day the police had an admission from Tosci that he had visited Ratto on the evening of his disappearance!

It may be well to say here, too, that the secret service men, although working at cross-purposes with the regular police, had been putting the screws to Tosci and Morton had finally gotten enough information to supplement his own investigations, and in a swift swoop five members of the Tosci gang were in the federal cells at the Oakland jail charged with handling counterfeit money.

All in all, the situation was growing highly complex for a routine plodder, and still no Lanagan! I had just about made up my mind to go on a still hunt for him, confident that he must have broken

his vows of abstinence, when he called me up. His message was curt:

"Suggest to Sampson to stick personally until he hears from me. Meet me at once at Hyde and Lombard."

Sampson usually left the office at midnight. Lanagan preferred his dynamic energy on the desk when a big smash was on; and when he asked for Sampson personally I knew he had landed. And Sampson always preferred being at the city desk when Lanagan was swinging home on the bit.

"Fine work!" was all Sampson said; it was not in his cold-blooded cosmos to show disinterested enthusiasm. Possibly it was that characteristic, coupled with twenty years' seasoning at the wheel, that made him the greatest city editor in the West.

Lanagan's clothes had that peculiarly hand-dog appearance that the newest suit will get when a man has slept in it once or twice; and Lanagan's clothes were seldom new, so the appearance was emphasized. He had evidently found no time either to shave or change his collar. Worn lines were about his mouth and eyes such as you see in athletes who have "pulled off" weight in hard training. But his eyes, those dark, mesmeric eyes, were sparkling and the old engaging trick of smiling was there.

"Began to think maybe I *had* 'lost my grip,'" he said, with a short laugh. "But I have either turned up one of the finest police stories in my time or I have gone plumb crazy. We will soon know."

Without more words, he walked quickly several blocks down over the eastern slope of the hill and turned into a narrow tradesman's alley. I noticed that he was watching keenly before and after us. He slipped through a gate in a high board fence and we were in a yard overgrown with shrubbery and weeds. The house was a corner one and of that familiar type of old family residence, seen in most localities, that has gone to seed on a mortgage. It was vacant. He opened the kitchen door with a skeleton key and we walked upstairs, turning into a large room commanding a view of the street. He kept away from the window, I noticed.

"Draw up the Morris chair," he said facetiously, as he squatted on his legs. I sat down against the wall and pulled out a cigar but he stopped me.

"Can't take a chance. Smell of smoke might give the whole thing away. See anything curious about this room?"

I looked at the bareness of it and shook my head.

"Examine it," he said. "You haven't even looked it over."

I knew he was not given to joking, so I got up and went over the room carefully. The door to the hall was swung back against the wall and I closed it.

Hanging on the door knob by the leather wrist thong was a blackjack, a duplicate of the one with which Ratto was slain. Lanagan was laughing quietly.

“What are your sensations at being in a prospective death chamber?” he asked.

Visions of being suddenly pocketed in that vast, out of the way mansion by a ring of Camorristi, assailed me, and I instinctively felt for my revolver.

“Don’t worry,” said the baffling Lanagan. “The trap won’t spring for several hours yet. But after it does spring,” he went on, “and this mess is over, I’m prepared to present the fair Bina with the biggest box of French mixed in town. That is,” quizzically, “if my puritanical Mentor will permit me to? But seriously, Norrie,”—his next words came forth rather hurriedly, and much as a shamed school-boy might make a confession,—“seriously these Italian girls are mature women at sixteen. And though you may not think it, I am only thirty-four.”

When it filtered into me what he was driving at I jumped to my feet and pulled him to his.

“Jack,” I cried delightedly, “you don’t mean —”

“No,” he said, shortly, “I don’t mean anything, now or any other time, Norrie, until I’ve taken a seat on this water wagon that I know I can ride for life.”

My thoughts shot back to that declaration in the reporters’ room that I had pondered often since uttered. It was clear enough now. He was a man’s man, Jack Lanagan; and looking back now even after the years that have passed since then, looking back from the content of my own cosy

home, the tears spring and I stop writing. He did not marry Bina.

"That's about enough of that," he said. "I wanted you to get the lay of the house by daylight. Let's get out of here. I've got to see Leslie."

But we were only as far as the head of the stairs leading to the lower floor when a key grated in a lock some place beneath us and Lanagan gripped my arm, his finger to his lips, his eyes glittering like a snake's. We swung back on tiptoes to a small closet at the end of the hall, pulling the door almost shut after us. Lanagan dropped, his eye to the keyhole. He had drawn his revolver and I drew mine; my heart was beginning to thump like a big bass drum. There came to my ears the sound of footfalls up the creaking stairs. At first it seemed like a dozen men and I concluded for once that one of Lanagan's traps was going to spring the wrong way.

The footfalls disintegrated as they came nearer and I found there was but one person. Lanagan's eye might have been stuck fast to that keyhole, for his hat brim did not waver the fraction of an inch as he held his rigid, cramped position for long minute after minute.

Finally the footfalls sounded back down the stairs. Lanagan did not move until, to our taut ear drums, came the sound of the closing rear door.

"Well?" I asked him, wiping the perspiration from my forehead.

All he said was "Fine! Fine! Wait a bit yet, Norrie! That was merely a scout, taking a last look to be sure that blackjack hadn't been removed by any prospective tenants who might have been here."

He glanced at his dollar watch. It was six o'clock.

"There'll be two good hours before darkness," he said. "We'll take a chance and leave the house uncovered while I get hold of the chief. Unless you want to stay here?" he asked banteringly. I did not want to stay there, but he had me squarely in the door, as it were, and I had to say I would if he wanted it. I sometimes think many a man is made a hero against his will. Then a great shaft of illumination struck me and I asked:

"Here, Jack; why should they bring that blackjack here? They could bring a dozen with them and nobody be any the wiser."

But all the satisfaction I got out of that inscrutable, irritating man was: "How bright the understudy is becoming! You'll be tackling high C yourself next!"

"However," he went on, "I'm not going to permit you to remain here. Firstly and mainly, because I am confident nothing will happen until after dark, although for a moment I thought my theory had gone wrong, and in the second place, because you might scramble the whole platter on me and get to shooting recklessly."

We slipped out of the alley after Lanagan had reconnoitred long. He had good reason for not wishing to appear at police headquarters. It was generally known that he was off on some sort of a still hunt. He had been seen occasionally by some of the boys, and it was known, too, that he was not drinking. His appearance at headquarters in conference with Leslie therefore might bring a corps of sharp-eyed newspaper men on our trail.

He got Leslie on the wire, and within thirty minutes was in deep conversation with that astute thief-taker in the rear room at Allenberg's. There were few sections of the city where Lanagan was not on intimate terms with saloonmen. There are many times when they can be valuable to the police reporter, particularly in the Tenderloin and downtown. The two did not take me into their confidence, but once I heard Leslie say, explosively:

"Jack, you're as daffy as a horned toad."

I caught only part of Lanagan's answer. He was talking earnestly.

"I tell you, Chief, my information is correct. I've got the only leak in San Francisco into the Camorra and neither you nor the secret service have a man who can tap it. It's worth a chance, I tell you. We'll want Brady, Wilson and Maloney. We've got to cover every point, take no chances of a murder getting by on us, and smash this thing right on the nose."

Leslie studied Lanagan long and carefully. He had never been wrong yet.

"Not drinking, Jack?" he asked at last.

"Not a smell in three months," said Lanagan.

"You're on," the chief finally said, decisively.

I grew restive at not being taken "in," but Lanagan said I was becoming so very bright that a little discipline would do me good; harkening back, I suppose, to that remark about the blackjack. I said no more. They outlined their plan. Maloney was to hide in the yard of the house directly across from the alley gate — in that old-fashioned neighbourhood, tight board fences and hedgerows are common — and Wilson across the street where he could command the window to the room where the blackjack hung. We three, with Brady, were to take our position inside the house. The moment anybody entered the alley gate, or by the front door — Lanagan considered it likely that that approach might be taken under cover of darkness — Maloney was to lift himself to the fence top and strike a match. Wilson, in turn, as though lighting a cigar, would strike a match, and one or the other of us, watching back from the room window of the house, would know that the trap was set. In addition to watching for Maloney's signal, Wilson's position enabled him easily to cover the front door. Lanagan, it appeared, had planned the coup hours before and had his coverts already selected.

Their vigil ended on the outside, Maloney and

Wilson were then to jump and cover the front and rear doors, respectively, in case of any miscue inside that might permit of an escape. "Miscue" was Lanagan's word: and I reflected with some apprehension, that any "miscue" with such nervy officers as Leslie and Brady that would permit an escape out of that house would mean that probably all of us would be candidates for morgue slabs.

Dusk found us all drifting one by one to our stations. When I finally entered through the alley door, I could see neither Maloney nor Wilson, and yet I knew they had both gone before me and were in position. I was the last one in and Lanagan was waiting there to lock the kitchen door after me. We trooped silently upstairs, shoes off and in hand.

It was an unreal situation, waiting there as the deeper blackness of night settled down and the night sounds of an empty house assailed us magnified. Brady was standing the watch at the window for the signal. The rest of us were lined up in the broad hall. It was so dark you couldn't see a man a foot in front of you. Hours it seemed to me must have passed, with no conversation save a scattered whisper or so. We had tried the hall and room floors and the door to the hall closet and they gave out no squeaks.

"Psst!"

Softly, sibilantly, came Brady's signal. We backed into the closet. Brady in a second was with us. The door was opened six inches with Lanagan

and Leslie ready for a spring. I was in some fashion away back in the rear of the closet.

A key grated in the kitchen lock, and it sounded through the vast empty house with a peculiarly sinister harshness. It was a situation certainly unique in crime! The stairs creaked — there was the sound of heavy, laboured breathing. But there was but one set of footfalls! We heard the door open to the room where the ugly blackjack hung, and as it did Leslie swung our door out and, silently as so many black ghosts, we moved to the other door.

Against the window we could see a man's form dimly outlined. And then —

There was a flash of blinding brilliance, a report that crashed in the empty stillness of the abandoned mansion with the reverberation of a twelve-pound gun, and under the arcs of the swiftly flashing pocket lights of Brady and Leslie, we beheld, stretched almost at our feet as the form toppled backward and stiffened out —

Waters!

There was a gushing wound in the temple. Death had been instantaneous. With an eagerness that was more animal than human, Lanagan tore back Waters' coat, ran his hands swiftly through his every pocket, and finally, with a "Ha!" of satisfaction like a snarl, pulled out from an unsealed envelope in an inside pocket a page of writing:

"Daffy, chief: Daffy, as a horned toad? Well, here's the proof!"

Written in the hand and phraseology of a fairly intelligent man, it was as follows:

"I killed Ratto. I guess I have been crazy. I went crazy looking for murdered people in vacant houses from telegraph poles. I couldn't find any more, and then I thought I would kill somebody. I told Ratto on the street that I had seen a man's body in that house and he went in with me. I had never seen him before. I had left the door open as I ran out to him, but he didn't suspect anything. I killed him with a blackjack and then found the body in three days, from the telegraph pole. I had picked out the place several days ahead. I got everything ready and came up several times and it was funny no one saw me. I thought Ratto would say get the police but he was nervy all right and jumped right in after me.

"The room in this house I discovered in the same way. It was even better than the flat where Ratto was killed because the neighbourhood didn't have so many people. The black jack is on the door knob. I put it there so as I went into the room first to light a match I could take it off the inside door knob and hit my man as he followed me in.

"That reporter Lanagan and another man were hanging around this neighbourhood to-day. He has been talking to me kind of suspicious lately and I guess the jig is up. It's funny the police never suspected me.

"I guess I have been crazy all right. I would hang anyhow. But I am all right now and I will kill myself in the room. It's all the return I can make for Ratto. If nobody hears the shot I hope somebody finds me from a telegraph pole. It will give the newspapers lots to write about. That's what made me crazy. I 'got too much fame, I guess.

"William Waters."

There was a prolonged pause. Then:

"Humph," growled Leslie savagely. "The 'fame' you got isn't a marker to the fame 'that reporter Lanagan has heaped on me. For the original ass I'm it. I took that fellow for a loon. Jack, shake."

Lanagan could not forbear a soft sarcasm. That "daffy as a horned toad" rankled:

"Give your men a little class in Kraft-Ebing, Lombroso, Nordau or some of those specialists and you will get a better understanding of the pulling power of crime," he said, dryly. "I hadn't figured quite this kind of a finish," he went on. "But the minute he blazed that shot into his brain I was sure he had left a confession. If he couldn't get notoriety in life he would in death."

Quickly Lanagan told of his suspicions settling on Waters after Bina, his "leak" to the Camorra, had told him that the death of Ratto was as much of a mystery to the Camorristis as it was to the police. With Bresci a Camorra leader, the wise-

eyed and wise-eared little Bina heard and saw much that Lanagan in turn was told. On her say-so, he had absolutely dismissed the Camorra. He set himself to watch Waters and for three days and nights scarcely ever let the lineman out of his sight. From safe vantage points he had watched Waters at his grisly work of climbing innumerable telegraph poles. At times he had casually picked him up and tailed with him. It was evident that he had also aroused Waters' suspicions. He noticed him lingering in the neighbourhood of the house where we now were and finally sneak in by the alley door. After he left the house Lanagan had hunted up a locksmith, secured a set of skeleton keys himself, and let himself into the house, not knowing exactly what to expect.

He found the blackjack on the door knob, saw the telegraph pole out of the window and in a flash had realised the entire plan of the crazed lineman.

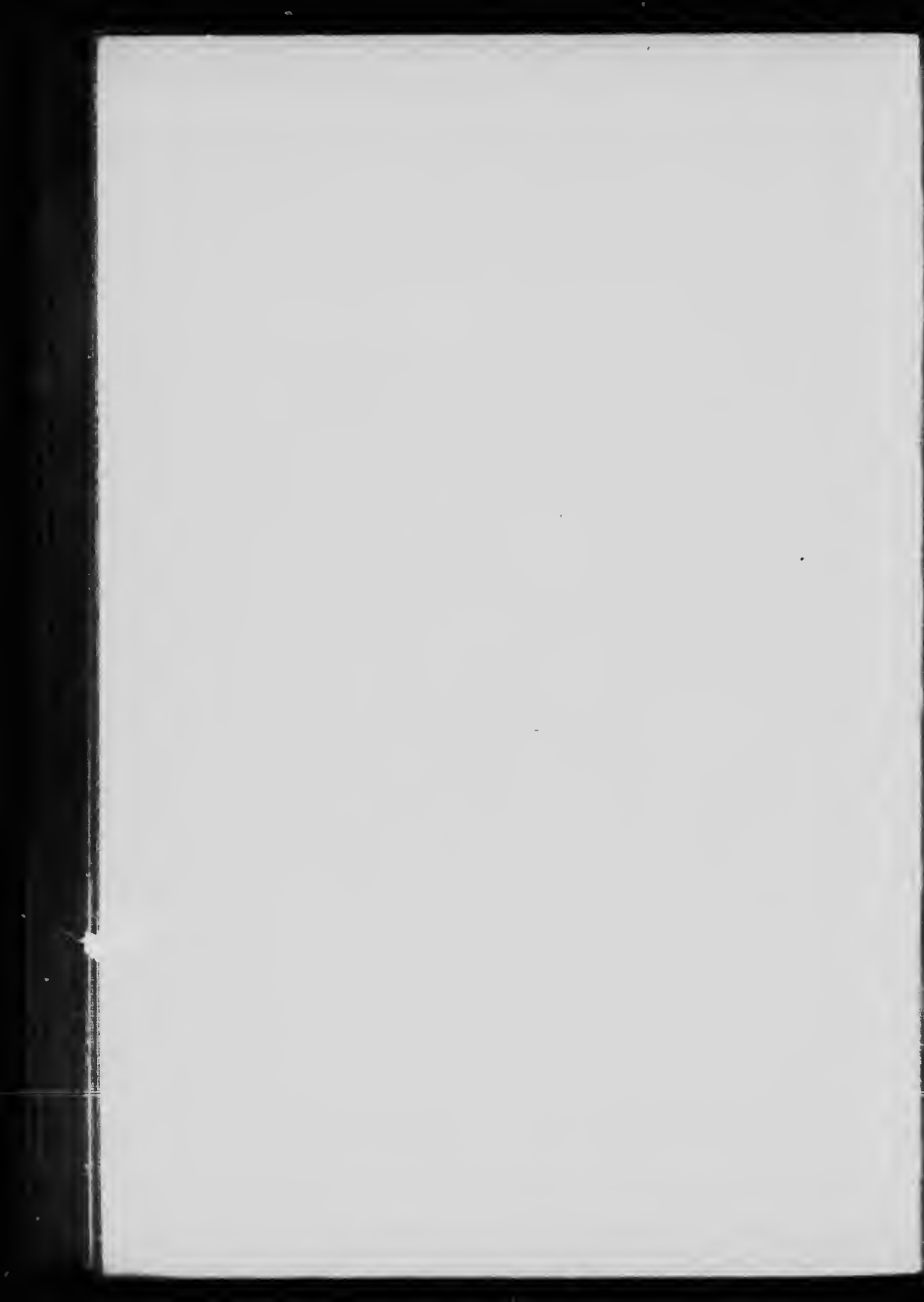
Lanagan assumed that Waters would not attempt to lure his victim in daylight. He had come back to the house while we were there merely moved by some insane morbidity to visit again the scene selected for the crime; picture possibly the slain man on the floor, himself peering in from the telegraph pole; and then the columns of newspaper space. That the room was commanded by a telegraph pole I had not noticed during the day or even my sluggish wits might have given me a hint of the truth.

"The shot seems to have raised no stir outside, Chief," said Lanagan, briskly, when the recital was done. "Call in Wilson and Maloney and stick around and give us two hours lee-way before you get the morgue. It's twelve-thirty.

"Now, son, you hit the pike with me for the Enquirer!"

IV.

WHOM THE GODS DESTROY.



IV

WHOM THE GODS DESTROY

AT Riordan's, much frequented by policemen and reporters, Jack Lanagan sat with Leslie, that greatest chief of his time, discussing one of Dan's delectable Bismarck herrings and a "steam." It was not above the very human Leslie to mingle in the free democracy of Dan's back room, where the gentlemen of the Fourth Estate foregathered to settle in seasoned nonchalance the problems of the world.

Leslie was speaking.

"You haven't lost out, Jack," he was saying. "But if that narrow-gauge Sampson elects to fire you — which I know he won't — I'll give you work if I've got to pay you out of my contingent fund. Get off that suisses diet and report. The *Enquirer* can't afford to lose you."

Lanagan, unshaven for a week, looked otherwise disreputable.

"The *Enquirer*," he reported judicially, "can afford to lose anybody. It's a sweatshop life, reporting; and they fill your place just as easily as Schwartz, down there on Stevenson Street, fills a place at one of his shirt machines. Nothing is as dead as a yesterday's paper — excepting it has a

libel in it; and nothing is so perishable as a reporter's reputation. The slate is swabbed clean once every twenty-four hours. Your job is precisely that long."

"Rats. You're in a beautiful humour. They can't forget that Iowa Slim exclusive very soon."

"No; but only because of the fact that I haven't shown up for work since. They had given me warning before then. I'm through unless they send for me, and they don't seem to be doing that. As a matter of cold-blooded fact, the *Enquirer* likes my work but not my weakness. My type don't get much sympathy these times. I belong to the generation of the tramp printer; the days of a real ethical code in the profession. We old-timers are taking the gad — what few of us there are left — three times over for an even break with these peg-topped trouser boys at ten a week who once wrote a class farce.

"No, chief," concluded Lanagan dispassionately and deliberately, "I guess I've shot my bolt in San Francisco. I'll ship on a banana boat and flag it on to Panama. Maybe when I get there I will tangle up in some big complication and another Davis will come along to chronicle me with that other Derelict; a grand story, by the way, chief — a newspaper epic. You should read it."

Leslie ignored the morose mood of the reporter. "Shot nothing," he said in disgust. "Take a Tur-

kish bath and sweat that grouch out of your system. Here, take this ten. I want you to get back to your paper. You're too valuable a man to be out of work in this town."

Lanagan rejected the proffered money, and Leslie was attempting to force it on him — there was a warm bond of friendship between the two men and a mutual admiration for the abilities of each other — when Brady from the upper office stuck his head through the door. He saluted.

"Captain Cook sent me over to say that it looks now like that Hemingway case was not a suicide after all. There are no powder burns on the face. The revolver must have been put in her hand after she was shot."

Cook was night captain of detectives. Leslie jumped to his feet and swung Lanagan to his.

"Here! This will put you on your mettle. I didn't like the looks of that case from the start. I am going out and take hold of it personally. Come along. Maybe you can turn up something that the *Enquirer* will be glad to hear from you on. Come along, Brady."

They jumped into the police machine and were whirled out to a fashionable home on Pacific Avenue. It was 9:30 o'clock. Less than an hour before a report had been received of the suicide of the daughter of the house, a *débutante* whose coming-out party had been an event of the spring be-

fore and whose engagement to a broker, Oliver Macondray, had just been announced.

Wilson, accounted one of Leslie's shrewdest upper office men, was already in the room when Leslie, Lanagan, and Brady arrived. There were there also a shoal of newspaper men and photographers, and the smell of flash powders was heavy on the air. On the first report from police headquarters I had been sent out by Sampson and had already been in the house for half an hour. But I was glad to surrender the story promptly to Lanagan when he entered, although he did not then say that he intended going to work.

It was Wilson, as I recall it, who had raised a doubt of the suicide theory by pointing out the absence of powder burns, although the bullet wound was in the right temple and the revolver clasped tightly in the right hand. A girl with her frail wrist must have pressed the revolver close before firing. It was clear the revolver had been placed in her hand after the shooting. It was an English bulldog of old pattern, one of those "family" pistols found in most homes.

"If you can't be first on the ground, be last," was an axiom of the newspaper business that Lanagan often tried to impress upon me. He proceeded to act upon his theory now by rolling and lighting a cigarette to give all in the room ample time to finish their investigation. Finally the room was



"Then Lamagan took his leisurely turn, drawing up an easy chair."

cleared of all save, Leslie, Lanagan, Brady, Wilson, and myself.

The room had one set of French windows giving out upon a wide porch and a heavily matted lawn. It would be next to impossible to say whether a person had escaped over the lawn by way of the veranda. The bedroom door was open when a maid, attracted by the shot, had overcome her terror and run to the room.

At the time of death the only persons in the house were the mother, daughter, and the maid, Marie. The maid was in a state bordering on collapse after the first siege with the detectives and newspaper men, and Leslie ordered her kept quiet for an hour. The occasional hysterical cries of the mother, prostrated in her own room, could be heard.

Leslie examined the body with minute care. The rest of us had completed our investigations.

Lanagan took his leisurely turn, drawing up an easy chair. Leslie, Brady, and Wilson had stepped through the window and were examining the porch and the lawn carefully with their pocket lights. Lanagan had taken one of the girl's hands up in his. He was examining an old-fashioned bracelet critically, very critically, it seemed to me. He flashed a sudden quick glance toward the window; the chief and the detectives were still busy outside.

"Stand at the door, Norrie!" he shot at me electrically.

I sprang to put my back to it, to give him a moment's delay in case any of the other newspaper men should drift back to the room. I had not the slightest idea what he was after, but I caught a glitter of fierce interest in his eyes, and I knew him better than to disobey. I did not see what he did then, save that he quickly placed something within his pocketbook, something that didn't have much substance, for he had to rub his thumb and forefinger to drop it into a piece of paper. Some of the newspaper men trooped back into the room; Leslie entered again, frowning in perplexity.

"Singular, Jack," he said. "What's your idea?"

"I think," drawled Lanagan, "I'll save my ideas for the *Enquirer*, Chief. I've concluded to go back to work."

Leslie stared. "You've got something," he finally said testily. "What is it?"

"Something that may save me being driven from town like a beaten dog, Chief, that's all. You didn't want that, you said."

"Confound you anyhow. You're too infernally clever. Go in and win," said the grizzled chief, but his tone was nettled and there was a natural trace, possibly, of professional jealousy that he could not conceal. It had never before happened that he and Lanagan had started off on an absolutely even break where it was a straight open-and-shut proposition of the best detective winning; and he

felt that Lanagan had found a clue in that room that he had overlooked. He was a hard loser. He went over the room again; he examined the body; he used his magnifying glass and he scanned the walls, the carpet, the clothing, inch by inch.

He was still reluctant to give up when the coroner's deputies finally arrived to discharge their melancholy functions. The mother was still in hysteria. The maid had calmed somewhat, and Leslie went to examine her with Wilson and Brady. Lanagan had drifted out and was sitting on the moonlit porch, to which the electroliers gave added brightness.

"When all those blunderbusses get through with their heavy work, Norrie, we'll have a run in with the maid," said he. "I seem to be the last man on the job. Meantime find out for me how many red-haired people there are about this house or among the immediate circle of the girl's friends. It is a matter of some importance, because—" he carefully opened the pocketbook, extracted the folded piece of note paper, and, first assuring himself that no one was about, pointed—"because here are two broken, half-inch bits of red hair that I take it are going to play an important part in this case. Remember the Deveraux case? These were wedged back of the cameo on her bracelet, and they got there in her last struggle with whoever shot her. For the time being at least, then, we will eliminate all but red-haired people."

"Maybe it's a dog's hair," I suggested hopefully.

Lanagan was on the point of retorting with his finished sarcasm when the Hemingway limousine, evidently bringing other members of the family or relations summoned by word of the mournful occurrence, rolled up to the brilliantly lighted portecochère. Lanagan's eye had travelled swiftly and fixed upon some object of interest. I followed his intense gaze.

The chauffeur's hair was as flaming as a fire-brand.

Lanagan's eyes seemed to be boring straight through the man as the machine came to a stop almost where we sat. The chauffeur's face was pale, extraordinarily pale, it appeared to me; as he stopped his machine and shut down the gears, there was a perceptible evidence of nervousness in his manner that was possibly entirely natural in view of the shocking happening of a few hours before that had taken the life of his young mistress.

The first to leave the motor was a trim, well-groomed young man, whom we at once recognised, from the descriptions we had heard, as Macondray. As he held the door open for the other two persons to leave the machine, he removed his hat, holding it in his hand.

Simultaneously our eyes rested on his uncovered hair.

His hair, if anything, was a shade more auburn than that of the chauffeur! His swollen eyes and

pale face were natural under the circumstances, with his marriage hopes thus painfully blasted. They walked within, and Lanagan said:

"Come on. We'll get first crack at this fellow anyhow. Let's meet him back at the garage in the rear."

We had started to walk back to the garage as the chauffeur cranked his machine when from the same low window Leslie and Brady stepped alertly. Leslie held up his hand to the chauffeur. The two officers were beside him in a moment. I knew what was coming even before they laid a hand on him. I had seen too many arrests made not to know what was meant by that brusque, cool manner, that quick step, that wary eye even before there came that familiar terse, short snap of the professional thief-taker:

"We want you!"

"The maid has spilled!" was Lanagan's ejaculation as we stepped up to the trio. Leslie could not forbear a pleased lighting of the eyes as he glanced at Lanagan.

"What have you got, Chief?" asked Lanagan easily.

"The maid, Marie, broke down and admitted that she let this man Martin into the house and into the girl's room at the girl's orders at 8.30 o'clock. Possibly ten minutes later, she says, she heard the shot. When she could summon courage to go to her mistress's room she found her lying on the floor

dead, the revolver in her hand. What have you to say, Martin?"

"Nothing, sir," said Martin levelly. "I have nothing at all to say, sir."

He was a man of about thirty. Lanagan's subsequent investigations disclosed that he had been with the Hemingways for many years, formerly working as a stable boy. When automobiles came into vogue, he had taken a place as chauffeur. He was a probation court boy when the Hemingways took him into their employ and "made a man of him," as he used to express it.

"Nothing?" snapped Leslie. "Well, we'll see. I guess we'll take him in, Brady, and give him the dark cell."

Leslie swung on his heel, and Brady, giving the chauffeur only time enough to run his machine to the garage, took him to the city prison and locked him up. But first I had noticed Lanagan pick up Martin's cap from the seat of the machine while the brief conference was going on and deftly extract something from it. The "something" proved later to be one or two of Martin's red hairs.

Other newspaper men emerging from the house had been informed by Leslie of the arrest. It was 11.30 o'clock by that time, and, with the arrest of Martin as their sensation, the morning paper men of one accord shoaled back to their offices. Leslie turned whatever ends might come up over to Wilson, with instructions to keep an eye on the maid,

Marie, and went back to headquarters satisfied that if Martin was not the murderer he at least could clear up the mystery. Lanagan started back with the rest, but dropped off the car unobserved and returned to the house. He was not yet satisfied that all that the inmates knew there had been told.

"You go in and write the story," he had told me. "That chauffeur isn't the type who is rendezvousing with the daughter of the house; and she isn't the type to engage in an alliance with a chauffeur. There is a nigger in this woodpile some place — and a red-headed nigger at that. Go off with your story if you don't hear from me by press time, but keep my red hairs out of your story unless you hear from me further."

I had gathered in my camera man and artist and hurried back to the office to write a story that I knew would be exactly similar in its facts with those in the other morning papers, leading off naturally with the arrest of the chauffeur.

There were still quite a number of relatives and family friends at the house when Lanagan returned. The reception hall was brilliantly lighted, and he hung up his hat. As he did so he examined Macondray's topcoat carefully and quickly. On the collar was one hair. It was tucked away, labeled, in a separate package in the pocketbook.

He went to the room of the murder to find Wilson there "sweating" Macondray. The broker was bent over a table, sobbing. The intermittent,

hysterical cries of the mother, hoarser and fainter as exhaustion came upon her, still punctuated the air. Wilson was reading a letter. He passed it to Lanagan.

Lanagan read, then, a startling few lines written by Miss Hemingway the day before to Macondray, breaking their engagement with the single explanation: *I love another. You surely could not want to marry a woman who had discovered she loved another.*

Lanagan passed the letter back. He was anxious to make a microscopic examination of the hair, but he wanted also to ₁ Macondray through a mill. He signalled Wilson to "jam," and the detective touched Macondray on the shoulder.

"Get together," he said brusquely. "We want you to answer a few questions."

"We aren't getting any place in this fashion," added Lanagan curtly.

"Tell me, Macondray, when did you get that letter?"

Macondray straightened up, wiping his eyes.

"This afternoon at 5 o'clock," he said.

"When did you see Miss Hemingway last?"

There was a long pause while Macondray gazed fixedly first at Lanagan and then at Wilson, as though trying to read their minds to learn what they knew.

"Because you did see her after the letter, you know," said Lanagan quietly. It was entirely a

random shot, but it went home. Macondray studied the matter over again for some moments.

"Well," he said at last slowly, "I suppose it is best that I tell all I know. I saw her last — at half-past eight o'clock to-night."

His head dropped to his breast and dry sobs shook him again for a minute.

"But as to her death I can offer no explanation. Only — you have Martin in custody, and I saw Martin in her room at that time. My God!" he burst out, "that Elvira could have sunk so low! A menial, a lackey — a chauffeur!"

"We don't want a dissertation on caste," said Lanagan with cold brutality. "What we want of you, Macondray, either here or at the city prison —" Macondray started, realising for the first time that suspicion was pointing his way — "is a simple statement of how you happened to see Miss Hemingway in this room with Martin and what happened after that?"

"I received her note by messenger at five o'clock. At half-past seven I called, but she was not in. I wanted a personal explanation. I called again in an hour. She was home, Marie said, and had gone to her room for the night and under no circumstances was to be disturbed. I determined to see her at any cost. I knew the position of her room here, fronting on the veranda. I went from the house by the front door and walked around here to the lawn. I intended only to attract her attention

by throwing a pebble against the window and compelling her to speak with me. But while I stood there on the lawn, searching for a pebble, an automobile drove slowly down Buchanan Street and stopped just beyond the Hemingway drive, behind the pepper tree. There were two men in it. One remained while the other, whom I recognised as Martin, came to the house, entering by the kitchen door. Of course, then I would not risk attracting Elvira's attention.

"While I was just turning to go, Elvira's curtain suddenly was raised, and I saw her peering out down Buchanan Street toward the place where the motor car was. Just when that tableau was being presented her chamber door opened quickly, and Martin entered. She seemed to be glad to see him, and extended both her hands to him.

"I could witness no more. It broke my heart. Sick and miserable that I had discovered so fine a girl, the girl whom I loved sincerely, in a meeting with her chauffeur, I turned and came away. That is all I know. Later I received a telephone message of the tragedy. They sent the car for me. I could not understand it then; I cannot now."

He was sobbing again with his arms on the table. Wilson stepped over to him.

"Brace up," he said shortly, "I want you to come with me. The chief will want to keep you where he can see you for a day or two." His

heavy hand descended professionally upon Macondray's shoulder. But Lanagan interrupted.

"Not a chance, Jim," he said, shaking his head. "I don't want to interfere with your duty, but I believe that chap is telling the truth absolutely. What we want to do now is to clear up the mystery of the man in the automobile. Martin must be made to talk. And, by the way, have you come across any red-haired people in this case outside Martin and Macondray? It struck me as a good little feature story. Here's a red-haired chauffeur and a red-haired fiancée. It's a combination that don't often occur."

"Humph," replied Wilson. "That's curious. The chief and I only saw Mrs. Hemingway for a moment, she was so unstrung, but she most certainly has the finest head of red hair for a woman of forty-four or five you want to see. Seems to be her own, too. Funny proposition, the three of them at that."

Lanagan was staring, for once taken completely by surprise, so pat did the circumstance fit his theories. He glanced at his watch. His eyes were dancing with excitement. "That will be all, Mr. Macondray, unless Wilson wants you for anything," he said. Wilson said he was through, and Macondray left the room. "Now, Jim, let's see Marie again. I'm collecting red hair; it's a fad I have acquired, and I want one or two of Mrs. Hemingway's."

"I was never more serious in my life," said Wilson, summoning the maid. He sent her for a brush containing combings of her mistress's hair. She asked no questions, but did as ordered. The maid acted like a person in a trance.

"Holding up to a certain point, and then she will drop like a plummet," thought Lanagan, then aloud: "I guess we are all through here, Jim, except one last fling with the mother."

But there was no "last fling" with the mother. She had been given a hypodermic, the nurse said, and was sleeping.

From a neighbourhood bar Wilson telephoned to Leslie, still waiting at police headquarters to get a last word from his men. The detective was still half decided to lock up both Marie and Macondray, but Leslie said no. Lanagan had borrowed Wilson's magnifying glass and had spread out upon the bar the different pieces of red hair. He was so deeply engrossed in making comparisons that he failed to follow the startling one-sided conversation going on between Wilson and the chief. Wilson whirled around from the receiver as Lanagan, profoundly stirred, carefully tucked away his collection.

"A child could see it," he muttered to himself as Wilson called out:

"Martin has spilled! Says he tricked the maid, who, by the way, is in love with him, into letting him into Elvira's room. There he declared his love

for her, demanded that she fly with him, and when she refused seized up the family revolver and shot her down, maddened by her command that he realise his place and return to the stables where he belonged. He escaped through the window after placing the revolver in her hand. They are going to book him now for murder."

Lanagan took a long time to digest this bit of surprising information. He made no comment other than to say:

"You're through for the night now, aren't you, Jim? With Leslie vouching for Martin as the man?"

"Yes," replied Jim, "and now I'm off."

A moment after he had been left alone Lanagan had Leslie on the telephone.

"Chief? Lanagan. Hop into your car and meet me at Farrelly's. Bring Martin along. It's quarter to one. Make time. And this is something absolutely between you and me; me and the *Enquirer*. Scoot now, Chief. I've something to interest you."

Since the incident in the room earlier in the evening Leslie had been restless about Lanagan. Within ten minutes the police automobile stopped at Farrelly's. Leslie and Brady, with Martin walking between them, entered.

Lanagan quickly led the way to the side room.

One grimed incandescent lit the room pallidly. Around a beer-stained table the four men sat, Mar-

tin farthest from the door. Lanagan's eyes were fairly snapping as he opened his pocketbook and spread it out upon the table. From it he extracted his little papers, each containing a piece or two of red hair. He laid each separate hair slowly, deliberately, before them all upon the table. Martin was watching the performance with eyes that glistened in the intensity of his interest. Equally absorbed were Leslie and Brady. Deliberately, precisely, Lanagan laid out the hairs—two from the brush of Mrs. Hemingway, one from the coat collar of Maccondray, two from Martin's cap, and the two short bits from the bracelet of Elvira.

Leslie had understood the pantomime the moment Lanagan opened his pocket-book and disclosed the collection of hair. He knew what it was now that he had overlooked; and, chagrined but alert, he watched each move that Lanagan made, for the solution had not yet come. Was it to be Martin? Leslie hoped professionally, for the sake of his reputation, that it would be.

"Martin," said Lanagan, flashing the word out like a dirk might flash in the sun, "what did Mrs. Hemingway ever do to earn your loyalty—even to death?"

Martin paled, visibly, even beneath the sick light of the weak incandescent.

"She has been very good to me, sir. She took me out of the court's custody and gave me a good home and a good salary. She made a man of me

when I might have become a jailbird. She has been a good mistress, sir."

"Yes, a good mistress," came through Lanagan's teeth. "You're loyal. The type of loyal retainer. You're not the type that falls in love with the daughter of the house. You never loved Elvira; you never murdered Elvira; and you are concealing now the name of the murderer, telling a poor weak lie that could not have stood at the outside for twenty-four hours! *Who killed Elvira?*"

Lanagan had arisen and glowered above the ashen Martin. Leslie was leaning forward, his eyes, gimletlike, boring into Martin's. Brady swung around, too, to face him, caught as well under the spell of fierce magnetism of the newspaper man.

"*Tell me,*" Lanagan snarled, "*who was in that automobile with you last night?*"

Martin's heavy lips dropped apart while he continued to stare affrightedly upon the newspaper man.

"*The mother of that girl found you in Elvira's room with her, making preparations for flight with whoever was in that machine!*

"I will tell you," continued Lanagan, hammering each word home; "I will tell you who killed Elvira Hemingway!" He leaned swiftly across the table, bending down and breathing a word into the ear of Martin. The effect was electrical.

"No! No! No — no — no! It was I, I tell you; I and no other! I shot her in my fit of madness!"

He collapsed suddenly, his head sinking on his breast, still gasping huskily forth his protestations.

"Look here, then," said Lanagan. He held Brady's magnifying glass over the hair — over the two hairs from the bracelet and then over the other specimens. The difference in the texture of the hair and a difference in colour were apparent under the microscope even in the ill-lighted room. That one of the three specimens was similar hair to that from the bracelet was apparent almost to the naked eye. Leslie's face grew grave. Brady had absolute unbelief written in his eyes. Martin took one peering look furtively.

"That hair," said Lanagan, indicating, "came from Elvira Hemingway's bracelet. It lodged there in her last struggle with whoever killed her. This is your hair, Martin; compare it. This is Macondray's; compare it. This is from the mother's head; compare it. A red-haired person killed Elvira. It was not you — it was not —"

But Martin had sunk his head into his arms on the table with a groan. Lanagan waited; Leslie waited; Brady waited — experts all at the third degree. Mind was mauling matter — and mind was winning.

"It was not you," continued Lanagan pitilessly as Martin lifted his haggard face with the look of pleading of an animal in his eyes. "It was not you —"

"But it was not she — not my mistress! It was

me! Mel!" The last words were a shriek; but the tax on his self-control had been too great. He fainted.

They threw water on Martin then and forced whiskey down his throat. He came to, staring in confusion from one face to the other.

"You have admitted the mother shot her own child," said Lanagan rapidly, giving Martin no opportunity to recover his composure. "Now tell us the circumstances of this unnatural crime."

Martin's breakdown was complete.

Elvira Hemingway, practically forced into an engagement with Macondray largely through propinquity — he was her brother's partner and a regular family guest — and through the wishes of her mother, inordinately ambitious socially to ally her daughter with the Macondrays, had finally jilted Macondray for a struggling young doctor, Stanton, a classmate at college. They were to have eloped, so greatly did the girl dread the scene that she knew would follow when her mother learned of her dismissal of Macondray. Martin, loyal, as he had said, to his mistress, but still more so to the daughter of the house, was party to the elopement. He had come to her room by prearrangement to help her out with a grip or two in order that no suspicion would attach should she be discovered in the room, on the porch, or crossing the lawn. The machine — the same that Macondray saw — was waiting at the pepper tree. But while Martin was in

the room the mother, on some slight errand, had unexpectedly gone to her daughter's room.

There she found her daughter fully attired, the French window wide open, and caught a flashing glimpse of a figure disappearing through the French window, that she recognised as Martin. At first flush she accepted the incident as an interrupted rendezvous of some sort between her daughter and her chauffeur, and one hot word of charge had brought a swift retort from the daughter, and a quarrel had arisen.

Martin, sneaking back to report progress in the room to Stanton, heard the rising voices in anger, and learned enough to know that the girl, under stress of her excitement, had revealed the plan for the elopement. He counselled with Stanton, and both agreed that Stanton had best retire and await developments, Martin to keep Stanton posted by telephone. In the grief and excitement of the final tragedy he did not do so, and the lover, worn by a sleepless night, received his great blow when he opened his morning paper. But this is not a tale of love or lovers, except insofar as they concern the solution of a crime, and Stanton therefore, with his blighted life, passes out of the story.

Martin, determined to intercede in hope of softening the lot of the daughter, taking all blame to himself as the messenger of the secret lovers, hurried then, back to the house.

Some primal strain of vulgarity, some poignant

pang of disappointed motherly ambitions, or possibly some pang of personal ambitions thwarted, led to the utterance of one malediction sharper than all the others by the mother. In a moment of sudden hysteria the old-fashioned revolver that had been on her mantelpiece for years had been seized by the daughter in a wild threat of suicide.

The mother seized her wrist. A violent physical struggle for the weapon followed. This was occurring just as Martin was making his way back through the house to the room, taking along with him the maid, Marie, huddled, frightened, against the hall wall at sound of the unseemly family quarrel.

There was a flash and a report in his very eyes as Martin opened the door. The revolver, he said, was unmistakably in the mother's hands; but whether the discharge was accidental or intentional in heat of passion, Martin could not say.

And that angle of the story never was cleared up.

The mother had swooned. When it was clear to the frightened servants that the girl was dead, they had carried the mother to her room.

The plan of the two was quickly formed. In their clumsy way they concluded it would be best for all concerned if the revolver should be placed in the girl's hand to indicate suicide. Martin placed it there, while Marie laboured with the hysterical mother, trying to instil in her mind, in which the entire terrible scene was a whirl,

the idea that Elvira had, in fact, committed suicide.

As for the confession:

"I feel I was to blame in a way, sir," concluded Martin, wiping his eyes. "After all I would have been a jailbird anyway if she hadn't saved me, most like. I thought I could protect her, too, sir, by confessing. I supposed if I said I committed the murder that would settle it."

Lanagan glanced at his watch. It was half-past one.

"There's one more move yet, Chief," he said, "and I go to press in thirty minutes."

In a moment or two they had all reached the Hemingway home again, surprised to find it brilliantly lighted. Servants were running about frantically. An excited voice was at the telephone as the quartet walked through the door. It was the butler.

"Hurry! Hurry!" he was crying. "Hemingway's! Pacific Avenue! For God's sake hurry!"

"What is it?" demanded Lanagan.

"Carbolic, I think," replied the butler. "She escaped from the nurse and got to the bathroom. She had been raving for an hour entirely out of her head crying to Elvira to forgive her—that she—" he stopped suddenly, his lips coming together in a taut line. "Another loyal family retainer," thought Lanagan as he and the chief ex-

charged quick glances. "Only this one can keep his secret for all of me."

They hurried to render first aid, but one look convinced the reporter and the policeman, used to deaths in violent form, that the troubled and frightfully burdened mother's soul had gone to a higher court for judgment.

Lanagan raced back downstairs for the telephone. It was five minutes to two. By the accident of being on the ground he would have at least that tremendous exclusive of the mother's suicide.

And that — good story as it was — was all the *Enquirer* printed, for it was all that I finally got from Lanagan just before the clock struck two.

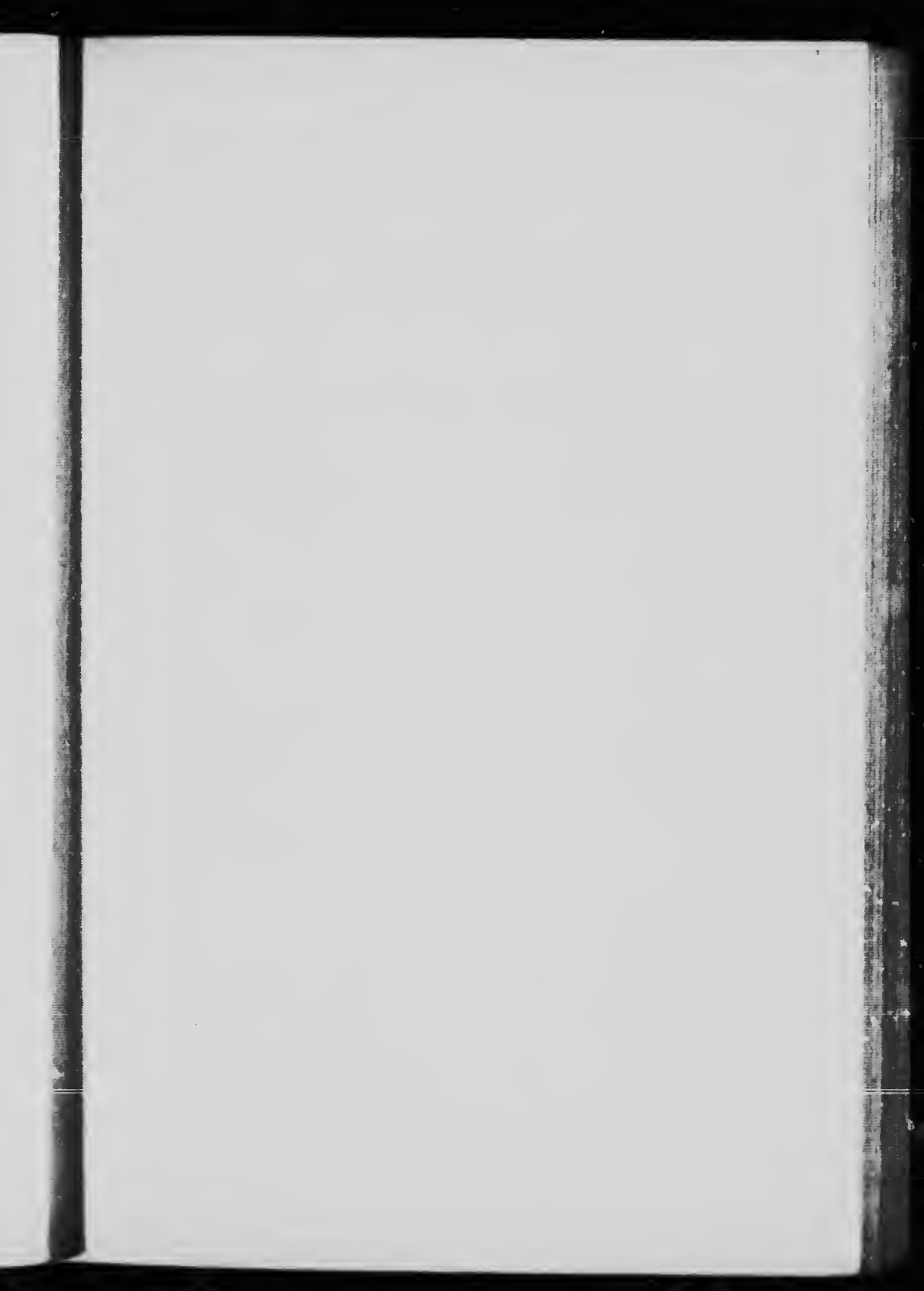
Leslie, standing by the telephone, said, tentatively and curiously, when the receiver was hung up:

"What about the real story? Saving that for to-morrow?"

"No, Chief," drawled Lanagan, full brother in the Fourth Estate. "No, Chief, that's *all* the story. She's dead, isn't she? They have had about enough trouble, this family."

V

THE AMBASSADOR'S STICK-PIN



V

THE AMBASSADOR'S STICK-PIN

THE manner of Lanagan's acquiring the Ambassador's stick-pin is nearly, if not quite, as interesting as the matter of his losing it. His possession of the pin was simple enough when one understands the chromatic ways of a police reporter's daily routine: and Jack Lanagan was the "star" police reporter of the city. The surrender of the pin is as easily understood, when one comes to learn something of the devious paths the police reporter is sometimes called on to follow, and the curious and startling situations into which they sometimes lead.

Thus, when Lanagan, drifting indolently with the matinée throngs down Powell street, stopped to hold confab with "Kid" Monahan, that now retired King of the pickpockets, it was natural enough that he should remark on a stick-pin of odd design that replaced the accustomed three-carat in the "King's" silk cravat. Gentry who lived by their wits and other people's wealth, affect stones of much size. Some policemen wear them, too.

It was natural enough, that the "King," proverbially generous, noticing the glance of interest, should say, "Here, wear it," and with a motion as quick

and as deft as a hummingbird's flit, transfer the pin from his tie to that of the newspaper man.

It was then for Lanagan to observe, dryly:

"Your title is certainly earned," as he extracted the pin and offered it back. "But this being a pin of very unusual design, I am afraid I might not be able to wear it as gracefully while awaiting the possible appearance of its owner, as can you. Further, that little exhibition of refined 'touch' you just gave, excites some grave suspicions that you are back at your old tricks."

The one-time King knew Lanagan's outspoken ways. Further he knew perfectly that, while the police accepted his declaration, since his last time out, of fealty to the law, he was a two-timer. The police were using him, or thought they were, as a "stool;" Lanagan did not think so.

"If it hadn't been for what Lombroso classified as the 'criminal lobe,' I might really believe you had reformed," Lanagan had told him once. "But in view of the lynx-like quality of your ears to be all top and no bottom, I am afraid the stamp of an extremely low moral resistance is indelibly upon you."

And Monahan had only grinned then as now, in his ingenuous way, uncomprehending, and exalted Lanagan a notch or two. For some minor favour in times gone past, Lanagan had earned and held steadfastly the King's unswerving loyalty; not an insignificant asset for a police reporter.

"Jack," said the King in pained sincerity, "I'm not passing you no chance. Got it down at Small's. Was shoved for a finner and I took it out of curiosity. Funny sticker, ain't it? If anybody does make you though, why of course, hand it over. I like my old spark better anyhow."

Small, be it said, was probably the thriftiest and crookedest fence inside the county, with the headquarters men on the pawnbroker detail taking orders — and percentages — from him, as faithfully as they reported to their captain of detectives. With another of those flits, the King placed back in his own necktie his customary brilliant, taken from his vest pocket. Before Lanagan could offer the other pin back the second time, his companion had left. Lanagan examined the pin critically.

It was a "funny sticker," round, of gold and the size and thickness of a quarter. The back was plain, fitted with a patent clasp. On the face was a delicate relief of two eagles, heads out. An eye, a ruby for an iris, was in the exact centre. Below the eye were two clasped hands and above, two crossed swords. Woven around the entire design was what he at first took to be a snake, but discovered, on closer scrutiny, to be a rope. It was a delicate and unusual product of the goldsmith's art.

Lanagan puzzled over it for an hour and then concluded:

"Russian, from the eagles; emblem of a secret

order, evidently, from the eye; the clasped hands to signify that an oath has been taken and the axe or the rope is the headsman, or the hangman, for a breach of faith. That sounds plausible. But what particular society does it represent?"

He placed it in his tie and was recalling what he had read about Russian secret societies, when he was bumped violently by a short, swarthy individual who had, unknown to him, been following. As Lanagan straightened up he caught a quick flash, as of a message of tacit understanding, in the other's eyes, as he gazed straight at the pin. In another moment a black flat wallet, thin and oblong, had been slipped adroitly into his inside coat pocket; a word which sounded like "scoraya" had been whispered in his ear, and the singular stranger had departed to the street to jump aboard a passing car, and disappear toward the ferry.

Lanagan made it a rule to be surprised at nothing, to accept nothing as coincidence not proved so, and to ignore no trifles. He was interested; highly interested, and he wanted to know what "scoraya" meant. That there was a connection between the pin and the wallet was, to him, clear. Possibly "scoraya" might help him.

In Fogarty's back room, hard by police headquarters, he found Petroff, Russian interpreter in the police courts.

"What does a word that sounds like 'scoraya' mean?" he asked.

"It means 'hurry,' 'at once,' or any such meaning. It is what you Americans say, 'get a move on,' said Petroff.

Sitting apart Lanagan unfastened the black seal-skin wallet and drew out a single sheet of paper, encased in a protection of oiled skin. There were written on the paper in a bold, strong hand, an even dozen words; words that sent his breath whistling through his teeth. It was in English, plain, clear, and signed by a name that gave even the imperturbable Lanagan a mighty start.

"Undoubtedly," mused Lanagan, "they either have a system believed infallible, or they are mighty reckless of State secrets—and they are not reckless. Therefore the system has slipped a cog, and I am the anointed bearer of the message of His Serene Majesty, Nicholas. I appear to be on the knees of the gods," he went on, as he wandered the streets, perplexed. "It's possible, barely possible, that I am tangled in some monumental hoax. But I don't believe it. If I don't miss my guess I will be giving the austere Mr. Sampson, damned of all men of my tribe, the biggest exclusive his sweat-shop paper has turned out in this generation. But—I need more coincidences. I am plainly stumped."

He had stopped by Lotta's Fountain where the traffic patrolman was endeavouring to untangle a jam of trucks and automobiles.

Out of the very air, as though in wierd solution to his perplexity, it came again:

"Scoraya!"

Lanagan wheeled to find the voice. He had thought he must turn directly upon the man. There was no one near him save the occupant of a limousine, two feet away. The passenger was apparently engrossed in the evening paper. The window, though, was open. Lanagan watched him covertly from the corner of his eye.

"Humph! This is getting interesting. Here am I, a live newspaper sprout, in the dead centre of a bustling and work-a-day American city, caught as sure as the sun shines, in the mysteries of a diplomatic maze between two great nations, and probably three, that is as twisted as a mediæval intrigue. At this moment, the whereabouts of little me and my message, are probably of as much importance as the comings and goings of the Czar, the Mikado, or the First Gentleman himself. But the next gay cat that tries any scoraying on me, will get the third degree right in Fogarty's back room."

The limousine, the traffic jam relieved, pulled slowly ahead, but Lanagan could have sworn that the benign gentleman within, just before it did, turned fully upon him with a scrutiny of deliberate coolness. It was a casual thing, such as might have happened to anyone; but it appeared to Lanagan that there was a look of ~~secret~~ understanding in the other's eyes, as they ~~dropped~~ ~~away~~ to the stick-pin and returned to ~~Lanagan's face~~ as though in inquiry. Lanagan took ~~the number~~ of the car,

89,776, and then returned to headquarters. He wanted to see from the police register to whom machine 89,776 belonged.

When he ran through the pages to the number, the ragtime air he was whistling — very incorrectly — quickened in tempo.

“89,776 — owner — Boris Koshloff — 2224 Pacific Avenue, San Francisco.”

“Aha! Either I am hearing scorayas in my mind, and either everybody that looks at me excites my suspicions, or else the Russian Mr. Koshloff is a link in the very plain chain that is stretching from me and my pin to His Majesty Nicholas, at St. Petersburg on one end, and the President in Washington at the other. Frankly, it looks preposterous that if Koshloff is on the job, he would use his own machine. Then again — what if that is the method chosen to point my path to me? If this message is to anyone in San Francisco, they must know by this time that it has gone astray. Barring my own coincidence in bungling into State secrets via “Kid” Monahan’s touch, and his taste for the really distinctive in jewelry, it appears that everything is working out on a very remarkable and finished system. I shall pay Mr. Koshloff a visit. He has been too much of a figure of mystery in this city anyway.”

Boris Koshloff, a wealthy Russian portrait painter, had dropped into San Francisco with introductions, some months before. He had earned a

high repute for the elegance of the soirées given at his house, and had figured in the public prints, moreover, in other ways. On one occasion, a burglar, found prowling within the Koshloff's drawing room, had been shot and killed by Koshloff, who thereupon was lionised to a considerable extent by the neurotic and sentimental elements of his circle. He had figured again, when a household servant had fallen from his second story window, receiving frightful injuries. Although during his raving in delirium the servant had cried frequently "spare me! spare me!" and had led some cynical reporters on the hospital beat to suspect foul play, nothing was ever proved in face of Koshloff's explanation that the servant fell in cleaning windows. After the man recovered sufficiently, he was removed by Koshloff to a private hospital, and there he passed from the scope of the newsgatherers and hence from public attention.

Now, it might be well to say here, and before the reader is too far carried away by the story, that the curious chronicles of the happenings about to be recorded must rest for all time, for their authentication, in five quarters: the Russian government, the American Department of State, Jack Lanagan, "King" Monahan, and myself.

It is not probable that either the Russian or American governments would affirm the truth of the facts recorded. As for the rest — the extraordinary series of complications following the receipts of

the stick-pin, the use of such a device as the stick-pin, as the connecting link in a grave international crisis, the use of the personal courier rather than cipher-code — they must all be accepted on my word, the word of Lanagan, or the word of "King" Monahan, who first received the pin. To such as are unwilling to accept that proof, the story must be read solely as a bit of fiction.

Lanagan strolled back to the *Enquirer*. I had just finished several yards of real estate junk for the business office, and was as grouchy as the brother of the tribe always is, when assigned to do business office write-ups.

"Fine line for an able-bodied reporter," said Lanagan cynically, looking over my shoulder. "Turn that rot in and come with me and be a real reporter. I'll give you a story that will make the A. P. wires hum to the four corners of the earth — provided my hunch don't go altogether wrong."

He spoke to Sampson, telling him that there was a bare chance of something turning up on the Russo-Japanese situation, and asked for me to be detailed to accompany him.

"Good," replied Sampson, "get after it. We haven't broken a story on that yet. The eastern papers are having a lot of stuff on the Secretary of State, though. He has dropped out of sight; the A. P. is bringing in a story broken by the *Sun*, that his supposed sickness was the bunk, and that as a matter of fact he has been out of Washington

for a week. Supposed to be in New York on some confab with the Russian Ambassador who is at the Waldorf-Astoria. The Ambassador denies any such conference. It's a hot yarn. Try to turn up an end on it out here."

Lanagan suggested supper and as we lingered over our coffee and cigars, he briefly outlined the situation. I read the astounding message and must confess that I was stirred to a very unprofessional pitch of excitement. Before taking a car for Pacific Avenue, we dropped in at police headquarters where Lanagan met Chief Leslie, that shrewd thief-taker, and they were in earnest talk for ten minutes. In his police reporting Lanagan had the superlative advantage of Leslie's confidence. That famous chief had indeed as high a regard for Lanagan's work as for that of his own men. Leslie stood many a "roast" from the opposition papers for his habit of programming with Lanagan, and for turning over his men to the service of the newspaper man more than once.

As we rode to our destination Lanagan instructed me to take a position, well concealed, opposite the Koshloff house, wait until midnight, and then if he did not appear, telephone to headquarters where Brady and Wilson, two of Leslie's best men, would be in readiness with the police automobile. We were to force the house.

"For it's just possible," said Lanagan lightly. "that I can't escape delivering my packet. If they

once drop to me, it may be interesting. That 'burglar' shot by Koshloff takes on rather a new importance. Likewise that foreigner, who was all broken up in an accidental fall from Koshloff's second story window. I rather look forward to a run in with this gentleman of mystery and his retinue of 'scorayers.' But don't wait after midnight. Brady will have a search warrant on some 'phony charge or other, and you can tear right in."

We parted company several blocks from the Koshloff mansion. It was nearing nine-thirty. I found a hiding-place almost directly opposite, slipped in, and in a few moments saw Lanagan walk briskly up the stairs of the Russian's house. He was whistling a bit of ragtime; as usual off key. His insouciance cheered me. Frankly, I was nervous; a weakness I cannot seem to overcome. I have never failed Lanagan yet at a crisis, and I suppose, on results, am as brave as he. But in my own heart I know I am not. Possibly gifted with a little more imagination than he, I can see further; picture the slab at the morgue, the gang in the police reporter's room chipping in for a floral piece while somebody tries to relieve the strain by saying something funny; Johnny O'Grady or Jim Bradley, or some of the others of the old guard delegated to the pleasant detail of carrying the news home; it was always the same. I always had that faculty, as Hamlet says, of thinking too precisely on the event.

The door opened to Lanagan's ring, and he passed from my sight to be ushered along the main hall, down a flight of steps, through another long hall, carpeted richly, with niches here and there holding exquisite statuary, to a billiard-room panelled in richest mahogany. From the conduct of his guide it was apparent that he was expected. In the billiard-room two smooth-shaven, trim, keen-eyed men were playing a desultory game. Surmise was bulking large within Lanagan's breast. He had seen that same type before. Secret service was stamped as indelibly upon them as his vocation is stamped upon the upper office man.

A light tattoo on a panelling, an answering tattoo, another staccato and the panel slid back and the odour of black cigars was heavy on the air as Lanagan stepped into a small compartment, the panel slipping noiselessly shut behind him as his guide disappeared. At a table were seated two men, facing him.

One of the two he recognised: Koshloff. But the other! Lanagan looked hard. There could be no mistake; those features had been looming from the front pages of the papers too frequently for any mistake. Lanagan stood without speaking, but before his mind's eye was dancing the front page of to-morrow's *Enquirer*. He would lay a seven column lead across that page that would carry around the world.

It was Koshloff who spoke.

"You have the packet? Yes? Would you present it?"

Then, in a low voice to the other, as Lanagan calmly placed the sealskin wallet upon the table, Koshloff murmured:

"Assuredly my superiors must know their business. But I cannot comprehend the disappearance of Carlos and the transfer of the pin and packet to the stranger. It must be in order, however. Our system has never failed."

He turned a shrewd gaze upon Lanagan, studying him intently.

"When do you return?" he asked finally.

"Just as soon as I am permitted to," replied Lanagan with perfect truth.

"Strange," muttered Koshloff in the other's ear. "Peculiar. It is the answer. We have no choice. It must be in order."

Without more ado the packet was opened and Koshloff presented the slip in silence to his companion. That man, of massive, intellectual forehead and deep set, penetrating eyes, scanned it carefully and pondered long, Koshloff watching him with half closed but eager eyes.

"Tell your Imperial Master," said the other, turning sharply upon Lanagan and speaking with clean incisiveness, "that you met the Secretary of State in person, and that the Secretary, speaking for his excellency the President, says, that the answer of the President is — yes."

The Secretary of State, ten days disappeared from Washington, out here on the western fringe of the continent, pledging the attitude of the United States in the threatened Russo-Japanese conflict and not a line in any paper in the world to indicate the whereabouts of the Secretary, his business, or the definite attitude of the United States in the impending conflict!

It was the story of a newspaper man's lifetime.

"Carry the verbal message, or transmit it to your relief," instructed Koshloff. "Conditions may not make packets safe by the time you reach the Orient. You may go. You have funds? Your pin is safe?"

"I have," said Lanagan, who, with two days to go to pay day, had about sixty-five cents. He indicated the pin with a gesture and turned on his heel for the panel, to be stopped by a sudden muffled uproar from the billiard-room, a sound of excited, shrill cries, of scuffling.

Neither the Secretary nor Koshloff moved a muscle; neither did Lanagan. He was thoroughly in possession of himself. Two panels swiftly and noiselessly slid open at the farther wall of the room, and two smooth-shaven, trim, keen-eyed men stepped into the room alertly and took their places beside the Secretary's chair.

"Mr. Secretary travels with the entire secret service bureau," Lanagan found time to comment to himself.

There came a tattoo on the panel from the billiard-room. The Secretary held up his hand for silence and motioned one of the secret service agents, who stepped noiselessly to the panel and listened. The tapping came again.

"Answer," commanded the Secretary. "It is over, whatever it was."

The panel slid open. Through the aperture came one of the billiard players, flashing a quick, steely glance upon Lanagan.

"Balked, by the eternal!" shot through Lanagan's mind. "The owner of that pin has shown up. It's now or never." He stepped casually to the panel; it was a fine chance. Once through there, he could make a fight for the front door,— and the seven column exclusive in the *Enquirer*.

Directly before him, fairly filling the space of the panel, was the other billiard player. It was quick action. Lanagan shot out his right for the man's jaw; but his arm got about half way. A grip like an iron clamp had him just above the elbow. He was whirled face about, a secret service man on either side.

As though nothing had happened, the man who had first entered through the panel door spoke:

"There is a person outside somewhat excited who wishes to speak to Mr. Koshloff. He said to say it was Carlos."

Koshloff leaped for the doorway and in a moment

more had dragged fairly by the hair of his head, a wild-eyed, dark-visaged person who, when he straightened up, perceived the pin in Lanagan's tie and made a tigerish spring for him, a dirk gleaming in a half arc as he leaped. But the right fist of one of the secret agents met him en route, and the frenzied Carlos was disarmed. He staggered to his feet, striving vainly to get at Lanagan.

"Thief! Robber! Death to him! Death to him who dares rob the messenger of His Imperial Majesty, Nicholas!"

"The gentleman appears to be teething," remarked Lanagan.

Koshloff pressed a button and two swart giants appeared. He indicated Carlos with a nod. "He wore the pin, but he has failed in his obligation. He must receive discipline." The miserable wretch fell to his knees with upraised hands, supplicating.

"Ah, no, Sire! My wife! My babies! Ten minutes too late, or I would have had it back and this sneak thief's life!"

But Koshloff frowned impatiently and in a second more Carlos was whisked away, a wierd scream floating back wearily from some hidden corridor to indicate the terror that gripped him. There was something in that scream of fear of more than the knout. As it rang through Lanagan's ears, he recalled the crossed axes and the hangman's noose of the pin. It was clear enough. There

would be another burglar killed. He wheeled upon Koshloff.

"Professor Koshloff, or whoever or whatever you are," he said in a tone of deadly acidity, "that man is turned up out of here unharmed by so much as a scratch, or I'll have you snaked into the city prison within twenty-four hours, and some other very general suspicions will incidentally be given an airing. You may be the right eye or the right hand of His Serene Majesty Nicholas, but I'm Jack Lanagan of the San Francisco *Enquirer*, and in my own particular bailiwick, something of a czar myself. You're a long way from Russia right now. You're in little old San Francisco. Did you get me?"

The cat-like quality of Lanagan's eyes to glow under the stress of anger or great excitement, exhibited itself. His face in anger was not what was calculated to put infants to slumber. He had forgotten the Secretary for the moment; the agents had all withdrawn. He was recalled to him when that person, taking his cigar from his teeth and gazing upon its ash contemplatively, said in even tones:

"I think possibly you are unduly exercising yourself. Something of a Czar?" The smooth voice went on. "Indeed, and it is a pleasure to meet the Czar of the bailiwick of San Francisco," and the Secretary bowed profoundly and gravely. "Now let us talk business, Mr. Lanagan.

"As for Carlos, his case is absolutely ex-terri-

torial so far as we are concerned. Please inform me how you came by that packet and pin — eavesdropping in matters of State? Do you young men of the press hold nothing sacred? Not your country's peace or the peace of other nations?"

"So far as that goes," retorted Lanagan, coolly, "and not condescending to take note of your 'eavesdropping,' we young men of the press have a duty to our papers which our papers in turn owe to the people. In this case it is a clear duty. By what right do you or any other man, president or not, arrogate to yourself the power to hold this secret caucus, resting your country's stand in this grave affair entirely upon the judgment of one or two men? You are the servant of the people. Let the whole people know where you are now and what you are doing. Get the sentiment of your country before you plunge into this agreement. I personally most emphatically disagree with the answer you are sending back. The public are as likely to think my way as yours."

The Secretary looked bored. "It is not possible."

"With this exception," grimly. Lanagan turned for the panel and sought the spring. "It is ten minutes after twelve," he said laconically. "I must leave here. Open the door, if you please."

Neither man moved. The Secretary said:

"We have not quite covered our ground. You have not answered my question."

"The pin I received from a friend who claimed to have taken it from a pawnshop. The packet was put in my pocket by a swarthy man who met me on the street and who said 'scoraya.' So did another chap in Koshloff's automobile. I wanted to see the thing through that so accidentally came my way.

"Now, when I came in here I did not come alone. I am fully aware that nations, planning wars to cost hundreds or thousands of lives, would not scruple at one. My friends should be breaking in here now. I told them to give me until twelve o'clock.

"So far as your man Carlos is concerned, I can only surmise that he was to meet a courier at the steamer, but had his pin stolen from him. The courier then wandered the streets seeking the pin, and by happy chance tumbled against me wearing it, and likewise wandering the streets. The other 'scoraya' boy I presume was one of Koshloff's secret service men, sent out to see that the messenger reached here safely. He must have likewise picked me up on the matinée promenade by accident."

"Correctly reasoned," murmured Koshloff. "And I believe you have cleared the situation. A most remarkable series of coincidences; but then, anything may happen in this remarkable city of yours."

"Do I go peaceably?" asked Lanagan, glancing

at his watch. His voice hardened a trifle. It was twelve-thirty.

"After — ah — a bit," purred Koshloff, and the next instant was gazing coolly into Lanagan's police Colt's.

Koshloff lifted his hand with an indolent gesture, to push the muzzle to one side, took a look into Lanagan's eyes, thought better of it, and turned with mock deprecation to the Secretary. That gentleman was watching Lanagan with frank admiration.

"We've got a place for you, Mr. Lanagan," he said, heartily, "any time you care to come to Washington."

Lanagan was nettled. Here were keen, quick-witted, level-headed men poking quiet fun at his spectacular display. Because they were of the quick intuitions of the exceptional mind, they fathomed his mind and knew that he would not shoot. Lanagan felt rather boyish for a fleeting second; got himself in perspective, as it were, and grinned at the grotesqueness of the situation. Then that seven-column scare head in the *Enquirer* — the exclusive that was to hum around the world, focussed before him.

"Open that door!"

Koshloff arose then. There is something singularly compelling about a blue-nosed revolver six inches from your temple, regardless of any psychological conviction you may have that the man is not

going to use it. But whether Lanagan would have carried the situation through successfully cannot be answered. For at that moment there came a tapping on the panel. Koshloff stopped at a signal from Lanagan. The tapping came again. The Secretary spoke:

"The situation is becoming strained, however diverting it may be to all of us. For my part, here are three men, all presumably of minds trained to meet sudden exigencies, and yet no one of us can solve this one. But other matters seem to be pressing." The tapping was becoming more insistent. "Let us call a truce, Mr. Lanagan, of precisely ten minutes. At the end of that time I give you my word we will return matters to just their present condition. It is agreeable?"

"Absolutely," said Lanagan, pocketing his revolver.

Koshloff sprang across the room and tapped. He was answered to his satisfaction, for the panel slid open, and after a whispered consultation with one of the secret service men, Koshloff stood from before the panel and —

I, Norton, my hands neatly manacled behind me, was ushered into the room.

Never will I forget the look on Lanagan's face. For at least three seconds, he was jolted out of his traditional immobility. His look was mingled alarm, surprise and amusement.

"Poor Norrie!" half-banteringly, half-serious.

"Poor old blunderbuss. I have certainly got him in a fine mess, him and his sick wife at home."

I was so glad to see that nothing had happened to him, that I paid little attention to the other two for the moment. I was telling him how I waited until 12:15 and had just determined on telephoning headquarters for Brady and Wilson when, standing as I supposed well concealed, I was suddenly pinioned by two figures that seemed to start up from the earth, handcuffed and hustled across the street into the room where we now were.

"I must compliment you on your organisation," said Lanagan ironically, bowing toward Koshloff. Around that gentleman's bearded lips played the faintest trace of a mocking smile. I could fancy how that smile ground into the proud soul of Lanagan.

The Secretary was growing impatient.

"The ten minutes, Mr. Lanagan?" he queried.

Lanagan turned and looked at me a long time.

"You should have obeyed orders," he said finally.

"I told you to give me until twelve; not twelve-fifteen."

It was the first time in his life Lanagan had ever criticised me, and it cut to the quick. I knew then how bitter his disappointment was.

"What is your 'proposition?'" he said, turning abruptly to the Secretary, whom I had at once recognised as well as Koshloff.

"I haven't any 'proposition,' Mr. Lanagan. It

is simply that neither the Russian government nor our government can afford to let the world power know that the Secretary of State journeyed, incognito, across the American continent, to reach a diplomatic agreement with Russia. Don't you realise what the publication of that unprecedented thing would mean?"

"My only proposition is a declaration. You hear most important information. It would undoubtedly make a splendid news sensation to-morrow morning. But you cannot possibly see the great dangers you would involve your country in. You might as well sit on a barrel of giant powder, and drop your cigar and expect to save so much as a collar button, as to print that story now and avoid war.

"My being here was absolutely a matter imperative for certain sufficient reasons. It was necessary that I present myself to Mr. Koshloff in person. That is all.

"I know newspaper men. Among the Washington correspondents I number many warm friends. I will take the judgment upon myself of placing you both upon your honour. If I permit you to go free from here, your lips are inviolately sealed for all time, upon the contents of that telegram. So far as I am concerned, that cannot be used until such time as this trouble has been adjusted; or, let me say, until the present administration is out of power at Washington."

Into the stillness that followed I could distinctly hear Lanagan's teeth grind together. Those remarkable eyes of his seemed fairly to emit a stream of fire, they blazed so fiercely upon Koshloff and the Secretary. He threw a sweeping glance around the room. It was a look for all the world like you see in the eyes of a caged tiger when he is aroused. For my part, there was a quick drop some place under my diaphragm. I was thinking of my sick wife, and the consequences to her of being held a State's prisoner.

His hand went to his pocket and he half drew his revolver; but it was rather a subconscious act, I think, than any deliberate design to use it. For Government, after all, is a potent thing. We fight for it and die for it. It has a splendid and natural influence not to be lightly tossed from us. And here sat one of Government's highest representatives. Lanagan's hand dropped to his side.

"That is better," said the Secretary. "For really, Mr. Lanagan, you cannot move from this room until we say the word. You are as helpless as though you were shackled. It is late and we have important work to do. Your answer?"

It was almost pitiable to see Lanagan then. He of a score of brilliant newspaper victories, the genius of his craft, who found no situation too difficult to solve, that striking figure in the newspaper life of the West who knew no duty save to his paper, who embodied the best and the highest ideals that

tradition gives to the gentlemen of the Fourth Estate, was beaten.

The glow had left his eyes and his voice was dispirited, as he said:

"You have my word, Mr. Secretary, but on one condition: that Carlos' life be spared, and that you start him back with your answer. It was no fault of his. There is only one man in town who could have got that pin from him, and I can hardly blame Carlos for losing it, once Kid Monahan wanted it."

"That condition must be granted, Mr. Koshloff," said the Secretary. Koshloff hesitated. "The wearer of the pin understands the penalty," he began, curtly. "I know. But in this case I personally request it." "It is granted," said Koshloff, definitely.

Lanagan was morose and savage. The Secretary proffered cigars, which Lanagan impatiently refused.

"There is one thing that I would like, however," he said with but faint show of graciousness, "and that is this pin. It will not be worn. I would like it as a memento; as something tangible to exhibit some day when I may tell this story, as proof, in support of, possibly, one of the most unusual experiences of myself or any other newspaper man."

"There are but two in existence," said Koshloff soberly. "This one belongs to our Ambassador at Washington. It was sent to me for use in receiving the imperial message. The other — is in the

possession of the Czar, and will be worn by the receiving courier at St. Petersburg. The penalty attaching to the loss of the pin, either to myself or my agents are — well, they are somewhat stringent and, with the single exception of Carlos, have always been enforced.”

Lanagan snapped the patent clasp and handed the pin to Koshloff.

“You see, if I lost it,” with the slightest inflection on the pronoun, “there would be no Czar of this ‘particular balliwick’ to pardon me as you pardoned Carlos, Mr. Koshloff.”

We walked the long distance back to town and dropped in at ———. Lanagan had not addressed a word to me. I knew better than to attempt to draw him into conversation. I could feel that he was working the thing over and over again in his mind. He suddenly burst forth passionately:

“I could have beaten them! I could have beaten them! And they didn’t convince me at that, that the story should not have been printed! There’s too much of this one-man-for-the-nation stuff in our government, anyhow.”

It was months before Lanagan told me that it was because of my wife’s feeble health that he feared to take the risk of having us both bottled up for a month, by manœuvring further for freedom; and had added: “Merely another argument to prove that your true reporter should not marry.”

And as if to justify the truth of Lanagan’s as-

sertion to me that the story should have been printed, within three days the Japanese fleet, scorpion-like, had struck and crippled that unsuspecting and unready Russian flotilla.

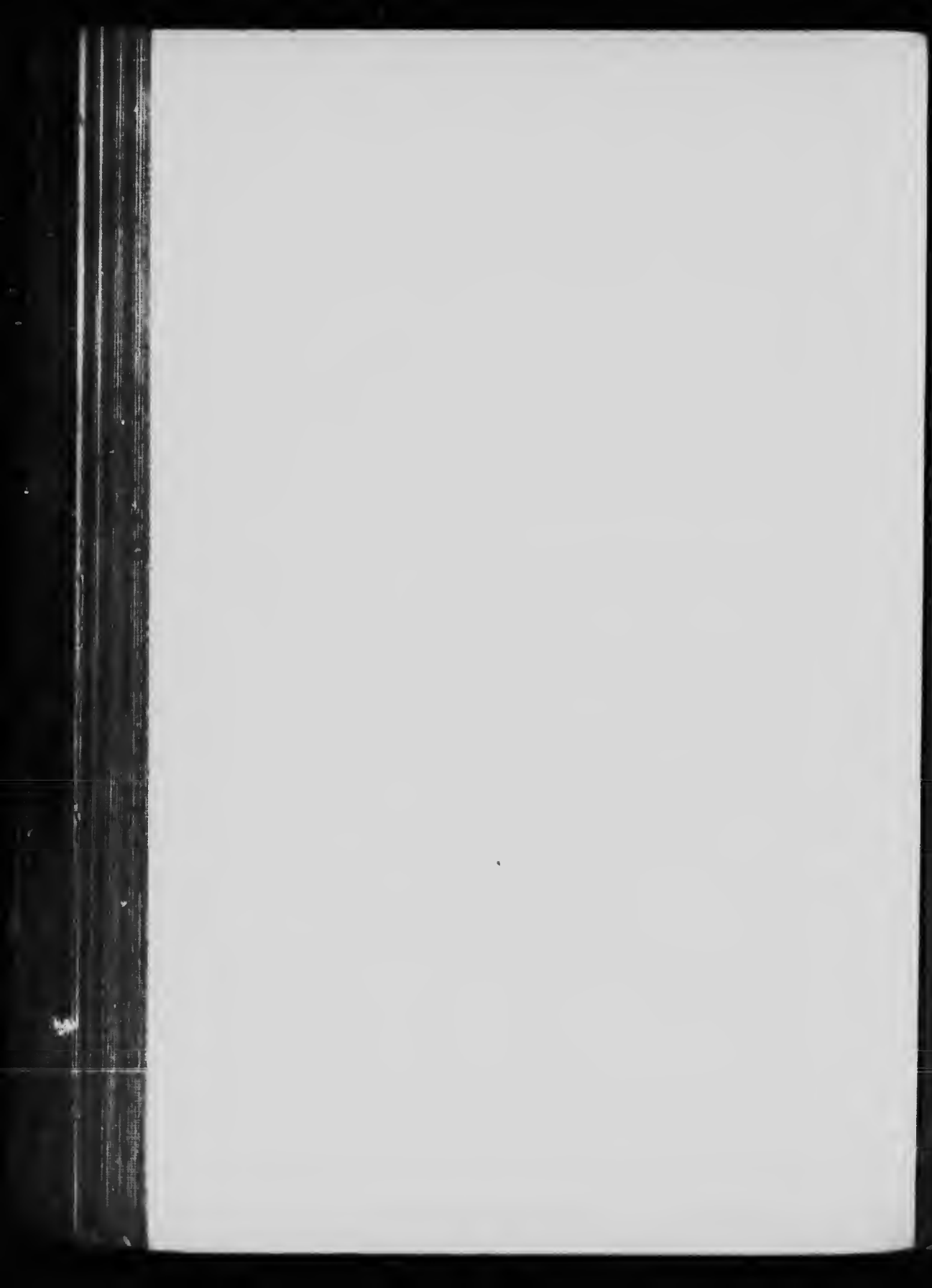
"Yah!" Lanagan had cried to me in furious disgust, as he ripped the front page of the *Enquirer* with its seven-column war head to tatters, "Statesmen! Diplomats! Give me one live reporter, and I'll teach the whole gang of them the right way! Do you suppose for one single, solitary, coruscating second, that if those Japs knew the Secretary was hobnobbing with the Russian envoy right here in San Francisco, that the blow would have been struck? Well, I tell you No! I wouldn't even have had to print the message. The story of the meeting was enough."

Well, the time limit set by the Secretary has long since expired, so here is the suppressed story of the Ambassador's Stick-Pin, the finest, biggest, cleanest in its elements of any of his whole career, as Lanagan mourned to me more than once.



VI

WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH



VI

WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH

SAMPSON, city editor of the San Francisco *Enquirer*, sat scowling over the *Times* and the *Herald*. Stripped blackly across the front pages of those rival morning papers was the unaccustomed seven-column head:

SUSPECT JAILED FOR MONTEAGLE MURDER!

"Norton!"

It was Sampson's voice. When Sampson shot that curt call in his ugly voice through the swinging doors of his office I felt as though the warden was calling me from the condemned cell for the drop. Only the able-bodied newspaper man who has been trimmed hard by the men of the opposition papers can understand the sensation. It belongs in its exquisite misery solely to such as speak the language of the tribe. For the head in the *Enquirer* — my story — had been only a three-column:

POLICE ARE BAFFLED IN MONTEAGLE MYSTERY!

Sampson contemplated me coldly and long; he

fairly brooded over me. But there was no outburst, and that, after all, was not worse than if he had put me on the irons for a broiling.

Ralph Monteagle, broker, millionaire, well-known, popular, and engaged to the equally well-known and popular Helen Dennison, had been found in his office on the fourth floor of the Sutton Building, stabbed to death. No weapon was found, the door was locked, the window shut. Neither money nor valuables were taken. The knife, curiously, had been sliced once across each cheek, evidently done after death, with deliberate intent to mar the features. Monteagle had entered his offices at 9:15 o'clock on Monday evening. The watchman had discovered the crime at midnight. The system in the Sutton Building permitted an absolute check on all persons entering the building after 8 o'clock, when the outer doors were locked. Any person coming in after that hour was admitted by the watchman, Murray, who until 12 o'clock was stationed in the lobby. The night elevator man kept a record of each person entering the building and to which room he went. It was a building given over to brokers, capitalists, and large law firms, and several robberies of magnitude had brought about this particular system of keeping a check on all persons in the building after night.

The elevator man, on going off duty at midnight, turned his book over to the watchman, who thereupon made the rounds of each of the offices where

there were still tenants or visitors. It was in this manner that the crime had been discovered after Murray had rapped repeatedly on Monteagle's door and had finally admitted himself with his master's key.

Only three other tenants had been in the building during the evening, and they were able to clear themselves of all suspicion. The police turned their attention to the attachés of the building. Suspicion fell on a janitor, Stromberg, who had the fourth and fifth floors. Apparently clinching proof of the police suspicions had been afforded when Stromberg's jumper, blood stained, was located at his laundry. It was in the arrest of Stromberg, which had taken place late the night before, that I had been "scooped" through my zealously in leaving the detectives uncovered while I followed a lead that subsequently proved entirely wrong.

Stromberg claimed to have cut his hand with a scraper while cleaning the mosaic tiling, and had a deep gash on the ball of his thumb. The police theory was that he had gashed himself purposely, and in answer to his defence that it would have been an insane thing for him to have sent his jumper to the laundry if he had committed the crime, held to the theory that he had taken precisely that method, in combination with the self-imposed gash on his hand, to divert suspicion by seeming frankness.

With the commendable faculty of the American

police in usually working to fasten the crime upon whomsoever they may happen to have in custody, the officers were devoting their energies to "cinching" their case on Stromberg.

When Sampson had completed his disquieting survey of me, he finally said:

"I am giving this story to Ransom and Dickson to handle to-day." I could see that he had it all figured out in his cold-blooded way; that nothing else was to be expected of me than to be scooped, and that any remarks would be superfluous. But it ground me. "What I want you to do," he continued nastily, "is to find Lanagan. Possibly you can succeed in that at least. I wouldn't be sorry at that if some more of you fellows drank the brand of liquor Lanagan drinks once in a while. I might get a story out of the bunch of you occasionally. Instead, the *Times* and the *Herald* give it to us on the features of this story three days running—*three days*. It's the worst beating I've had in a year. You find Lanagan and tell him I want him to jump into the story independent of Ransom and Dickson. I would like to get the tail feathers out of this thing, anyhow."

Ransom and Dickson had no relish for the story, three days old.

"Might as well try to galvanise a corpse," grumbled Ransom. I turned over to them what matters I had that might bear watching, and was about to leave the office when the 'phone rang for me. Very

fortunately, it was Lanagan; and I couldn't forbear a sort of gulp, because I felt instinctively that he had wakened up somewhere out of his ten days' lapse, with the knowledge that I was handling the Monteagle story and was getting badly beaten on it. I was right in that, too.

"Thought I would catch you before you left," he said. His voice was throaty, and I judged that he had been seeing some hard days and nights. "Suppose that pickled jellyfish of a Sampson has been lacing you? You should be laced. Met Brady a few minutes ago and he said you were muddling — or mishandling — the story. You ought to get a month's lay-off for letting that crowd of two-by-four dubs, on the *Times* at least, get the best of you. Come on down. I want to talk things over."

He was at Billy Connors' "Buckets of Blood," that famed barroom rendezvous by the Hall of Justice, where the thieves' clans were wont to for-gather. There was nothing of particular coincidence in his ringing me up just when he did; it was shortly after 1 o'clock, the hour when the local staff reported on, and he would be sure of finding me in.

He sat at the rear alcove table with "King" Monahan. "You know my friend the King, of course?" was his greeting. Monahan, one-time designated King of the Pickpockets, after serving two terms, had retired from the active practice of that profession to establish himself, it was gener-

ally believed, not only as a "fence," handling exclusively the precious stones, but also as a sort of local organiser, to whom any outside gang must report on or before beginning operations in San Francisco. There is system in crime these days as in all things else.

"Kind of stuck it in and broke it off, didn't they?" he continued.

"I've stood one panning from Sampson; I don't want another from you," I retorted savagely.

"Norrie," he said, "you overlooked a very vital point. The King and I have been talking it over," — he had the three morning papers spread out before him — "and we have concluded that there was a woman in the case. And when two eminent criminologists, like Kid Monahan and Jack Lanagan, agree that there is a woman in a case, it at least is worthy of consideration."

"A moll, sure," vouchsafed Monahan in his diffident way. He had a manner as timorous as a girl, which possibly accounted for the success that he enjoyed while practising his profession. He was not one, on the crowded platform of a trolley car, who would be immediately suspected when some proletarian raised a cry of sneak thief and sought in vain for a stick pin, watch, or wallet.

"Stromberg may or may not be guilty," said Lanagan, "but I don't think much of the case the police have made against him. It, at least, doesn't bar us from another line of speculation.

"Tell me, for instance, why in the name of the Seven Suns, didn't some of you sleuths go off on the theory that whoever committed that crime got into the office earlier in the evening and remained concealed in the closet until Monteagle came in? It would have been the easiest thing in the world to have decoyed Monteagle to his office even if it wasn't known that he was working nights to make up for the lunches and bachelor dinners and afternoon teas that he's been going to on account of his coming marriage.

"And as for whoever committed the murder getting out, you have been on the scene of too many murders not to know the hysteria that comes over a bunch of yaps like that. It's a safe bet they all ran for a regular policeman, and that whoever was in that room — provided he was still there, or she — when the crime was discovered could have walked out of that building with a fair way as wide as Market Street."

"Murray ran for a policeman," I admitted, "and some of the janitors with him."

"That's what special cops usually do," was Lanagan's comment. "And it's a safe bet that those square-head janitors all ran with him. They didn't stay around those corridors alone after that crime was discovered until a regular copper came along. I've seen the thing happen and so has every police reporter in the business."

Lanagan paused, pushed back a half-drained

suisses and called for a sweet soda — his curious habit when breaking off a “lapse.”

“Whoever killed Monteagle,” he continued, “was in that room when he entered — always assuming, of course, that it was not Stromberg.

“Now I have something additional, through the King and his invaluable sources of information on men and affairs. It is this: Monteagle is known to certain portions of the night life. He was a two-faced society blatherskite, with a broad streak of primal vulgarity, who drank tea in swagger drawing-rooms with his fiancée and her friends in the afternoon and champagne with an entirely different social set after midnight. You know the kind. Was rather keen about women in an underhanded, quiet way. It is not difficult for a man of his means to do a lot of things behind the unassailable French restaurant walls and get by with it.

“You recall the knife was drawn neatly across both cheeks. I see you indulged in a theory that he possibly was the victim of some blackmail brotherhood. You even hinted at the Mafia. I am surprised at you. You ought to let that exaggerated institution rest for a while. I have a little theory of my own on that knifing business, which, I think, we will now work upon. 'Phone Sampson when you get a chance that it pleases Lanagan to go to work for his sweat-shop wages again.”

We parted company with Monahan after he had promised Lanagan to drift through his particular

world — or that portion of it which was then up — and endeavour to learn something of the identity of any of Monteagle's affiiations under the rose.

We headed for the Sutton Building, and in the lobby found Murray, just coming on duty.

"Do you think anyone could have gotten out of that room in the excitement after you found the body?" asked Lanagan.

"No, sir," said Murray, with aged preciseness. "I locked the door on the outside when I went for an officer, and it could not have been opened, because in my hurry I left my master's key turned in the lock when I went for a policeman."

So much for Lanagan's very plausible theory of the "get-away." He came up from it as suave as ever and asked:

"Could anyone have been in that room before Monteagle came in, do you suppose?"

"No, sir," said Murray, with the didacticism of the aged again. "No, sir. There was nobody in that room. I know because the elevator boy, Denny, heard the telephone bell ringing for eight or ten times, and finally let himself in and answered it, but the party hung up. Mr. Monteagle was very free and easy with us men, which accounts for Denny taking the liberty. There was nobody in that room when Denny was in there, and that was well after eight o'clock, after I came on duty. It all gets me, sir, how that knife sticker got into that room or how he got out after he got there. I don't

like to think Ole Stromberg had a hand in it, but it looks a leetle black for Ole, according to the papers. I know my skirts are clear."

We went on up to the room. The Public Administrator, with Monteagle's lawyer and his stenographer, was there. The lawyer was inclined to get forward, but the Administrator was a good programmer for a newspaper man and smoothed matters over. Lanagan was studying the stenographer: intelligent of feature, stylishly but plainly dressed, and bearing about her eyes and mouth very plain indications of the nervous tension under which she must have laboured during the last three days. She was one of that type of well-poised secretary-stenographers found in most large offices.

Lanagan made an opportunity of asking her:

"Did Mr. Monteagle have any enemies that you know of? Persons who have threatened him personally, by letter or over the 'phone?"

"None that I know of," she replied quietly.

"Do you think," asked Lanagan quickly, eyeing the girl narrowly with those singularly penetrating eyes of his, "do you think it could have been possible that a person might have been concealed in that closet when you locked the office door for the night?"

"Oh, no, no," she answered quickly, but her eyes involuntarily swept first to the closet and then to Lanagan's face as though in secret, anxious questioning. "Why, it makes me shiver even to think



He le - mach?



such a thing could have happened," she added, and she unmistakably shivered a little.

There was more conversation, and Lanagan fell to examining the room. He first examined the closet. Then he opened the window and scrutinised the sill for a long time. He got down on his knees and peered beneath the heat radiator of coiled pipes. He lit a match, the space between the bottom of the radiator and the floor being so slight that he could not examine it as closely as he seemed to want to.

"Expect your man to get into the room through that?" asked the Public Administrator with heavy facetiousness.

"Oh, no," replied Lanagan smoothly; "it's just possible he got out of the room through it, though," and continued with his minute examination.

The stenographer, Grace Northrup by name, although assisting the other two sorting out papers, found time each moment to flash a quick glance at Lanagan. Whether it was merely active feminine curiosity I could not determine. As for me, I had been over the room half a dozen times already. It held nothing further for me; but I never could even guess at the clues Lanagan might turn up on a trail that a dozen men had tramped over, so I remained to see him work with keen interest. When Lanagan had finished we left.

"Now, Norrie, my boy, to the Bush Street office of the telephone company," he said with as much

enthusiasm as I ever saw him exhibit. "You are a fine old blunderbuss for fair! But the others aren't any better. Plain as the nose on your face! Lord, Lord!" He stopped and looked at me, laughing immoderately. I was inclined to be a trifle sulky; he made me feel like a six-dollar cub.

"Only," he continued, "it's a three days' trail that I have taken up, and that dirk wielder has got just that much of a start — always assuming, for the sake of the argument, that it was not Stromberg."

I didn't ask him what he was going to the telephone office for; it came to me with a sting that I had heard that same bit of information about the telephoning dropped during the last two or three days, and, in the press of clues that I considered more important, had dismissed it. Which was the difference between Jack Lanagan and the rest of us; he had that intuitive faculty of eliminating the superfluous and driving at the main fact. It is, after all, a faculty found in all successful men of whatever occupation.

We both knew Lamb, traffic manager of the 'phone company. Lanagan asked for permission to talk with the girl who on Monday night handled the board having Bush 1243 — Monteagle's number. Lamb was a substantial chap, and promised to keep our visit in confidence. It was just before 4 o'clock, and the 4 to 10 shift of girls was coming on. In a few moments a young girl of sensible,

pleasant demeanour was shown to the room, and Lamb retired after requesting that she give us all the information she might have on whatever subjects we discussed.

"You will be performing a service that will be appreciated," said Lanagan, "if you could recall whether on Monday evening, along about 8 o'clock, you had several calls for Bush 1243?"

"Yes, sir, I do," she instantly answered. "It was not a busy night and I was handling three positions. The call came from the east office. We do not talk to the party direct on an outside call, and east supervisor came on the line several times to instruct me to try and raise the number. That is how I recall it so distinctly."

"I may tell you that that is the telephone number of the office of Mr. Monteagle, who was murdered," said Lanagan. "I don't suppose you ever got a line on whom his telephone calls might be from as a general thing, did you?"

"No, sir," she answered primly. "I pay no attention to whom is on a line."

"Thank you," said Lanagan. "I think you can be trusted not to say anything about our visit or questions?"

"Yes, sir," she said.

We got a card of introduction from Lamb to Adams, manager of east office, and hurried there.

"Wasn't that rather an indiscreet thing to do, tell her Monteagle's number?" I suggested. Lana-

gan laughed and slapped me on the back. It was evident he was in high feather with himself. I was trundling along, absolutely in the dark.

“My dear Norrie, when you meet a girl like that take her into your confidence. Did you get that ‘to whom’? She smelt a rat and would have looked the number up and blown the glad tidings all over the office that a couple of detectives or newspaper men had been interviewing her on the murder. Recollect, too, that the telephone from the reporters’ room at police headquarters comes in on this exchange. It’s just possible that some of those gay young blades on night police have affiliations with some of these gay young blondes. I have got many a story through ‘phone girls — and have occasionally lost a story through the same medium. Get me? As it stands, she is all puffed up with her own importance and pat with us. There are times when you have got to take a chance at spilling your hand. This was one of them.” I subsided, humbled.

Not to occupy too much space with the merely routine details of working out the clue, we met Adams, another substantial chap. The chief operator recalled distinctly the number, more particularly because the woman calling it had been nervous and irritable. The call came, she said, from the public booth at Shumate’s pharmacy. It was only a couple of blocks away, and we went there.

It was a large establishment with half a dozen

clerks. We worked down the list. The fourth man had been on duty Monday night and recalled a young woman who had entered the booth repeatedly on that evening. She lived some place in the vicinity, he said, and usually got off the Sutter Street car shortly after 5.30 o'clock. The car stopped directly in front of the door, and if we would wait he would point her out to us if she came that way this evening.

I took a position outside to signal in when a car approached and Lanagan remained inside. It was then just after five.

Among the passengers from one car I noticed Miss Northrup, and was about to step forward and speak to her on a chance of her dropping something additional when I caught a glimpse out of the tail of my eye of Lanagan signaling me with a swift gesture. I dodged around the corner before she saw me. She passed on up Sutter Street, and in a few moments Lanagan picked me up, his sallow face taking on a tinge of colour and his dark eyes sparkling.

"Pretty near scrambled the eggs that time, didn't you?" he chuckled. "*That's the woman who did the telephoning.*"

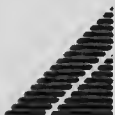
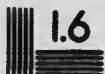
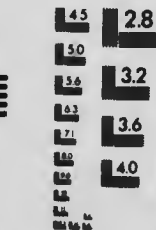
I stared.

"Do you recall that furtive look with which she followed me at the office? She lives just up there, where we will let her rest for a time with her troubles. And I fancy she has them. Let us



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go back to Connors'. I am to meet Monahan there."

The King was waiting for us. He took Lanagan to one side. All I could hear was Lanagan's "Good!" once, and then the King had slipped out the side door.

"Best single asset the police have is Monahan," said Lanagan, apropos of nothing in particular. "Knows more about the night life of this city than any four men in it. But he tips nothing that might hurt his own game or his own people. In a way he preserves a certain code even while acting as a police 'stool.' In this matter, however, the invaluable Mr. Monahan is working for Jack Lanagan; and the police are consequently about three laps behind.

"I see nothing in sight for some hours. We will eat our dinner and take in a show for a few moments. I rather anticipate a climax later and some rapid-fire work for us both on the typewriter. I need a little stimulus — that hasn't got wormwood in it."

He would give me absolutely not a line on his "lay." He could be a baffling, enigmatic, impersonal proposition when he took the humour.

We headed for the Oyster Loaf, and I groaned for the four and a half that was between me and pay day as Lanagan methodically disposed of an onion soup, special; French mushrooms on toast, a New York cut, Gorgonzola, and a two-bit cigar.

He drank three glasses of ice water, but that didn't cost anything.

"A man's meal," he said with vast creature content. "Now give me that other half you have left. I want a shave. You go up and touch Dan for a five-spot. We may need expenses later. I'll meet you at Dan's at nine o'clock. I want to pick Monahan up again before I see you, and also see Leslie."

At the time appointed we met. "Let's take a ten-twenty-thirty," suggested Lanagan. "By half-past ten we will have to get busy. There's a singer over at the Continental that some of the dramatic critics say has real fire. La Pattini, I think she is called."

So we drifted into the Continental and caught part of the performance. There were trained birds of more than ordinary sagacity; the stereotyped and fearful cornet soloist; the girl singer, La Pattini, with a wonderful mezzo, remarkable beauty, an undoubted future, and an ability to sing the "Rosary" in a manner to bring tears. Then came a slap-stick tumbling act that was impossible, and we left.

Lanagan had suddenly become thoughtful. "Do you know what I think?" he said. "I think the world would actually do better to sweep away every vestige of law and ordinance and make a clean start again. Our system of punishment is all wrong. Take one heinous class of crimes; we punish the

individual who takes upon herself to punish. We say the State has the power of punishment and the prerogative; and yet in the very crimes that are the most damnable, the State can never interfere because the injured party must suffer in silence. You might as well expect children to learn English through hieroglyphics as to make applicable to present-day conditions the antiquated penal code to which society is harnessed. That's about enough of the sermon stuff. It's not in my line."

Lanagan was taking the lead, but I was not altogether surprised when we finally found ourselves in the neighbourhood of the Northrup home. Nor was I altogether surprised when Chief Leslie, that shrewd and veteran thief-taker, suddenly stepped from a doorway. My mind shot ahead to the Northrup home, a few doors away, and I could not bring myself to believe it could be possible that she was a principal.

"Brady is above," said Leslie. "He says she came in about twenty minutes ago. We had better move on her."

"Immediately," said Lanagan, and in a moment more we were all three before the door to a lower flat of the old-fashioned sort, with a bell jangling noisily as Lanagan pulled out the handle.

It was Miss Northrup who answered the ring. She had on a dressing gown, and her hair, I could see, had been taken down for retiring and then gathered in a loose coil on her head, probably when

the bell rang. She opened the door but a few inches.

"We would like to speak with you a moment, Miss Northrup," said Lanagan. He indicated the chief. "This is Chief Leslie."

"Kindly permit us to enter," said the chief. There was a shadow of authority in his tone, and I knew that Lanagan and the chief were planning a drive on the girl and that something would be stirring in this old-fashioned flat before long. She hesitated a moment and then threw the door wide open and motioned us into the parlour. In the hall a gas jet burned dimly, as though for some member of the family who was not yet home.

She reached up and turned on the parlour light, and as she did so her loosely coiled hair tumbled about her shoulders. As the light struck down upon her features they had an appearance almost tragic.

"Be seated," she said; it needed no expert eye to detect in her drawn lips the evidence of nervous tension.

"Madam," said Leslie abruptly, snapping his jaws like a trap — and I knew this twenty-year-old girl was in for the third degree — "unless you at this time make a clean breast of all that you know concerning the murder of your employer, Ralph Montegle, it will be necessary for me to book you for murder as an accessory before the fact."

She started violently; her bosom began to rise

and fall quickly; it was evident a breakdown was imminent, but she managed to say with considerable smoothness:

"I know nothing more than I have already told the police and the reporters."

Lanagan, fierce eagerness glittering in his eyes, stepped before her.

"Nevertheless, possibly you know," he said, biting each word off short, "how many persons beside yourself and Bartlett, Monteagle's former chauffeur, who bought it, knew of the rope in his closet; knew that Monteagle had a morbid fear of being trapped in that building at night by fire; that he had had that fear since his friend Mervin was burned to death in the Baldwin Hotel fire; that he let no one know about the rope for fear of being ridiculed? How many persons, I say, besides yourself and Bartlett, knew the rope was there? *And when you knew that that rope had disappeared, as you must have known it, why didn't you tell the police? Why did you permit a man to lie in prison whom you in your heart feel is innocent?*"

She sprang to her feet and threw both hands towards him as though warding off physical blows. She was trembling in intense agitation.

"Don't! Don't! for God's sake, don't!"

She sank back again into her chair, her face buried in her hands, rocking and moaning, with Lanagan standing over her, inexorable as Nemesis.

There was the sound of quick, light running up

the front stairs, a key was turned in the lock, the front door swung open, and the girl in the chair, startled from her huddled misery, sprang to her feet and fairly leaped to meet the newcomer. She cried out, but whether in warning or in the joy of greeting could not be said, for her voice was half-smothered in a sob.

"Sister!" she said at last falteringly. "Sister, please go to your room. It is only some more policemen about Mr. Monteagle!" The words came chokingly. The other had not as yet come into our sight, but now she stepped into the light that streamed from the parlour into the hall — and I heard Lanagan's swift, involuntary ejaculation:

"La Pattini! Her sister!"

Leslie, swift as thought, was half-across the parlour floor to the hall, yielding to a natural police impulse, but the newcomer, the other girl clinging to her, stepped fully into the doorway to the parlour.

"Yes," she said in a voice that had no tremour of emotion, "La Pattini. Her sister. Why?"

"Why?" said Leslie, grimly. "Because we were just going to book her for murder as an accessory before the fact. We will switch the cut now and book you as the principal."

At the feet of the queenly Pattini the harassed sister swooned. Lanagan pulled shut the door leading to the hall so that no one might by any mischance disturb us, and I fell to chafing the wrists of the senseless girl.

La Pattini sank wearily to a chair, stooping so that she could stroke her sister's temples.

"I am glad it is over," she said, apathetically. "I have only wondered that it did not come sooner. I have expected it hourly."

The story was soon told: simple, age-old, but ever new, sordid possibly to a slight degree, but profoundly sad. She who was now known as La Pattini met Monteagle while visiting her sister at his office. He had found means to extend the acquaintance, had aided her in a secret way in her ambitions for the stage, securing the engagement at the Continental for her, and as a result of the clandestine relation there had been a promise of marriage. Then had come the engagement announcement of the Dennison-Monteagle marriage and the awakening of the dupe. But this was not the dupe of Monteagle's many experiences. The picture of Miss Dennison, staring at her from the society columns, had fired a sinister jealousy.

A confession had been made to the younger sister when La Pattini sought an opportunity of pleading once again alone with Monteagle, who had finally repudiated her. The sister had admitted her to the office after Monteagle left for the afternoon, knowing he was to return in the evening. She concealed herself in the closet.

Before she entered the office her plan had been formed. Either Monteagle would marry her or he should die. At that time she had no thought of

escaping. She had heard the telephone ringing repeatedly; heard the elevator boy enter the room just too late to get the party calling.

Finally Monteagle had arrived and she had discovered herself. What happened was quickly over. The quarrel was of few words, and he had struck her with his fist. She stabbed him to the heart, and then with a vindictiveness that she could not now understand and shuddered at recalling had marred his features with the knife. Her first thought had been to give herself up. Then she wondered why she should do that. The brief words of their quarrel had not been heard; the janitor she could hear on the floor above. After all, she had done no more than kill a snake.

The thought of the rope came to her. She knew about it, because once when she was in the office as Monteagle worked late she had expressed anxiety at being seen coming from the building with him, and he had showed her the rope and jokingly offered to let her down from the window, which opened upon a divisional alley in the rear of the Sutton building.

The rope was of great length. Seeking for a place to tie it, she naturally turned to the radiator. The thought occurred to her with a flash her means of escape from the room might never be known if the rope was long enough to run under the radiator, leaving both ends to the ground. She could then draw it down after she reached the ground

by pulling on one end and letting it run under the radiator like a pulley. She tried the length, the light from the windows of the elevator shaft, opening into the areaway, giving sufficient brightness.

"As part of the preparation for the future on the stage that Mr. Monteagle was to help me get," she said, dispassionately, "I have taken gymnasium work to build up my system. You can see it was no extraordinary thing for me to let myself down by the double rope, pulling the window shut after I climbed out. I left it open enough so that the rope could run free when I pulled it after me. I threw the rope in a street garbage tin. I was at the theatre, remarkable as it may seem, in time for my act at ten o'clock, although I missed the first show. I have been in a daze since; I was in a trance after I did the stabbing. I have known I must be found out. I am glad that it is all over. I have made no attempt to escape. I am absolutely indifferent to my fate."

The sister, recovered from her swoon, was weeping softly, her head bowed in the other's lap.

"Tell me," said Lanagan curiously to her, "why did you telephone to Monteagle?"

She gasped, and it appeared for the moment that she was about to swoon again. Finally she faltered, while her own sister looked at her strangely:

"I—was afraid sister meant him harm—I didn't think of it until I got home—and then something about her face came back to me—I

wanted to warn Mr. Monteagle not to arouse her — I finally succeeded in getting him at his club before he left for his office and — he only laughed —”

“Yes,” said La Pattini bitterly, “he told me so — and laughed — and snapped his fingers when he spoke about you — that was just before he struck me . . . and then I killed him.”

The sudden fresh sobs of the younger girl, smothered as they were in her sister’s lap, seemed to wrench her very being. Lanagan glanced at Leslie; Leslie averted his eyes. There was a prolonged pause, broken only by the agonised, stifled sobbing, while she of crime threw her arms shelteringly around the weaker vessel. But her own deathly calm she preserved.

Finally Leslie arose slowly and said simply:

“I am sorry. I have no recourse. My duty is clear.”

“So is mine,” said Lanagan quickly, “and it is this: I will guarantee you, Miss Northrup, the support of the *Enquirer*, and I will secure for you as counsel my personal friend, Mr. William Hadden, the ablest man in the West, to present your case to a jury in the proper manner to secure the acquittal that you are entitled to.”

It was then after one o’clock. We left Leslie at the house to bring the girl to the city prison after she had an opportunity of parting from her family. Leslie was to contrive not to book her before half-

past two to save our "exclusive." By that time the *Times* and the *Herald* would be gone to press.

On our hurried trip to the office — where I took vast delight marching in on Sampson with a grin — Lanagan supplied me with the missing links. He spoke of finding a few strands from a manila rope sticking beneath the radiator and of his instant surmise as to the precise way in which the escape had been made. Monahan located Bartlett, Monteagle's former chauffeur, who had taken a public stand, and from him learned of the rope that Monteagle had in his closet which Bartlett had bought. Lanagan knew from his careful search that the rope was not in the closet when he made his examination, and he promptly concluded that Miss Grace Northrup must have known who committed the crime. She knew the rope was there, according to Bartlett, and Lanagan rightly surmised that she must have known of its disappearance.

Robbery not having been the motive, Lanagan had "rapped" to the theory of a jealous or vengeful woman who had deliberately marred the features after death. His police experience had included a case or two where somewhat similar conditions had been present.

It was from Bartlett that the first tip came on La Pattini, although he did not know, and neither did Lanagan at that time, that she was the sister of Monteagle's stenographer. All he knew was that until he left Monteagle's employ she seemed

to be the favoured of the alliances that the broker secretly maintained.

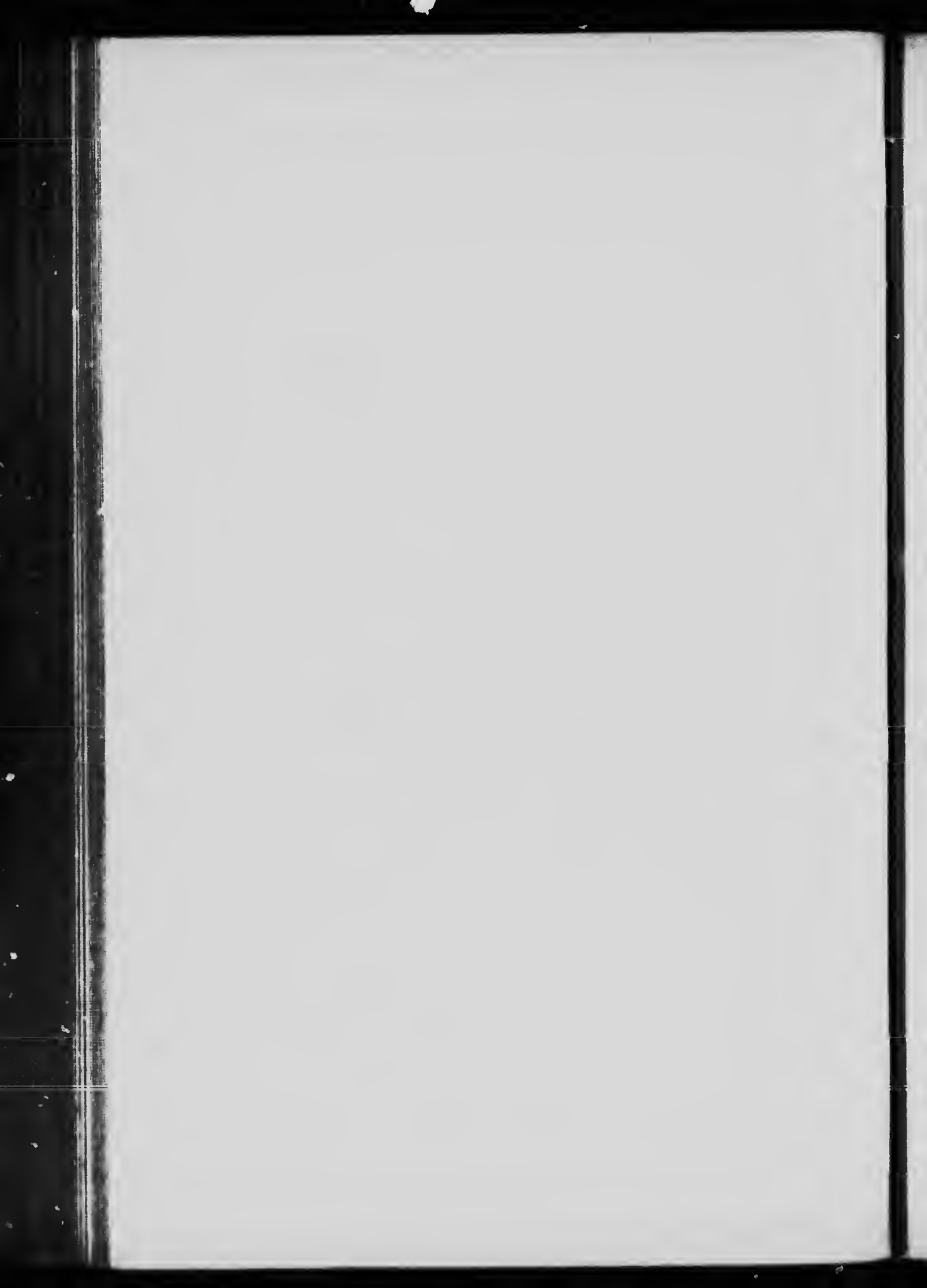
Lanagan had discovered that Lu Pattini had missed her first show on Monday night, and the circumstance was sufficient to stir his suspicions, although it must be confessed that until the development at the home, where her relationship to Miss Northrup was disclosed, nothing positive had been secured against her. The moment the relationship was made clear, both Lanagan and the chief had instantly reached the same conclusion. The "drive" had been made and the confession followed.

"Great, Jack, great," said Sampson with as much enthusiasm as his thin blood could support. "Gad! What a whaling we gave them! What a whaling!"

The *Enquirer* had smeared the story over three pages, breaking all make-up rules on type display. It was a clean exclusive in every detail.

"Well, Sampson," replied Lanagan, "it isn't much to be proud of at that. Only it's all in our game. But I've given my promise and we've got to get that girl acquitted."

"That's up to you," said Sampson. "The paper's yours."



VII
THE PENDELTON LEGACY



VII

THE PENDELTON LEGACY

"I HAVE always considered Bannerman," said Jack Lanagan, deliberately, "the crookedest judge that ever sat on the bench in San Francisco."

Attorney Haddon, distinguished in criminal practice, thumped his office table.

"Exactly," he said. "Have felt that way about it myself. But he seems to have a hold on the people. And he makes capital out of the fact that he ever permits a 'shyster' lawyer to practise in his court."

"Simple," replied Lanagan. "He doesn't have to. He does business with Fogarty direct. They take dinner two or three times a week at the St. Germain. Other times they use the telephone. Those are things people don't know. There aren't many who do outside of myself. But at that I suppose he might get by with the long-eared public with the explanation that 'Billy' Fogarty, bail-bond grafter and chief of the 'shysters,' was a schoolmate of his, raised on the same street, and a member of one or two fraternal organisations with him. All of which is true.

"Bannerman," he continued, "doesn't bother with small cases. He's after the big stuff. And I have

a hunch that somewhere back of this case there is big graft. He has been against us from the start. And by the Lord Harry," Lanagan had arisen, his black eyes snapping, "I've put several men in jail, but here's one that I'm going to get out. Peters no more murdered that little child of his than I did. It's an absolute obsession with me that there is some colossal mystery back of the whole thing; some gigantic conspiracy; and Bannerman's attitude to-day gives me the first direct line to work on I have had. I am going to work on it again at once."

Charley Peters, a machinist, twenty-five years of age, had been held to answer by Bannerman that day to the higher court on a charge of murder for slaying his week old son. It was a case that had attracted wide attention when several organisations of women's clubs took a stand against Peters.

He had married, as was brought out at the preliminary hearing, a woman of the night life, who had made him, to all report, a capable wife. Originally from Oakland, after the marriage he had moved to an isolated little home in the outskirts of the Potrero, where neither he nor his wife were known. Before their child was born they had been overheard by a passing neighbour in a violent quarrel. Peters freely admitted the quarrel, but explained that, on the particular night in question, he had been overwrought with a particularly hard day's labour, returned home wearied and worried to find a statement from the doctor for a large amount, and for

a moment had become resentful at having another mouth to feed with nothing but debt before him. The quarrel, he said, was quickly made up and the relations of the two were happy up to and after the child was born.

But the prosecuting attorney had made great use of the evidence, Bannerman ruling consistently against the objections of Haddon.

The dead child had been found by a crone, who was ministering to Mrs. Peters. She had placed it in a cot in a room adjacent to the mother's room, and had left both mother and child asleep at about six-thirty o'clock while she went out to attend to some small purchases. She returned at about a quarter to seven to find Peters just home from his work and sitting by his wife's bed. She was asleep. It was not for some little time later that the beldame, going to the child's cot, discovered that it was dead. Her first suppressed cry had been heard by the acute ears of the mother, even in sleep, and she awakened from slumber to call for her babe. In the excitement that followed with the husband and the beldame she became alarmed and, arising, made her way to the adjoining room to discover the dreadful truth. She sank rapidly after the shock and died within a few days.

It was not until the doctor, coming on a call to attend the mother, examined the child, that the marks of strangulation were discovered on its little throat. The police were promptly notified. After one

night's detention the old woman was freed of suspicion and the police hand fell on Peters.

He protested that he had entered the house not fifteen minutes before the old woman, had found both mother and babe asleep, as he supposed, and had sat down by his wife's side to watch, until the nurse returned.

Such were the principal facts.

Lanagan, working from a stubborn conviction of Peters' innocence, had devoted much attention to the case. Finally, when the police brought Peters to trial, Lanagan had enlisted the services of Haddon to defend him. Lanagan had known Haddon for a good many years; known him when he was a young prosecutor in the police courts. He had given him many friendly "boosts" in those days. Haddon had never forgotten. He was frank to admit that it was the newspaper men at police headquarters, constantly "featuring" him in the police news, who gave him his real start.

After Bannerman had ruled as a committing magistrate, binding Peters over to trial for murder, Lanagan had walked to Haddon's office, reviewing the events of the day.

It was his own conviction, as well as that of Haddon, that in all fairness, from the evidence presented, Bannerman should have dismissed the charge. That he should have held Peters as guilty gave Lanagan a freshened enthusiasm in Peters' behalf; because it appeared to Lanagan that Bannerman was acting

under powerful pressure in finding such a holding, even with the sentiment created by neurotic women in favour of a conviction.

"I'll keep you posted on developments," said Lanagan, as he left Haddon's office, cheerfully helping himself to a fist-full of the cigars which that discriminating smoker imported for his own use. "I may need your service later.

"Sampson," he said to his city editor a few moments later, "there's something funny about that Peters case, in spite of their holding him to answer. Haddon thinks as I do. I'm going to tackle it again."

"Tear into it, Jack," said Sampson. "You haven't turned much up lately, anyhow. Think you are going stale."

"We'll see," said Lanagan briefly.

The St. Germain, in the days before the fire, had a public entrance on Stockton street and a private entrance on O'Farrell. Directly across from the private entrance was a cigar stand, and there Lanagan loitered for an hour or more.

"If I'm right in this thing," he said, "Bannerman and Fogarty will be getting together to talk over the situation. And if they do I'll let them know pretty pronto that we suspect a nigger in the woodpile somewhere and see if I can't start them to covering up in a fashion that I can follow."

It was about dusk when he suddenly crossed the street and went in at the private door. Fogarty

had entered a few minutes before. Lanagan did not worry about Bannerman. He would take the front door, with his high silk hat and his frock coat and his exaggerated impeccability. That old French restaurant had turned up more than one good story in its day, and the upper floor steward was one of Lanagan's numerous "leaks" in the night life district.

A dollar to the steward and he had been told the number of the room where Bannerman was dining. He knocked at the door, as the waiter might, gently. It was Fogarty who half-opened it. Lanagan caught a glimpse of Bannerman, who passed the plate in the church on Sundays, with a dry Martini nicely poised at his lips. A champagne cooler stood comfortably by. Fogarty for a moment seemed about to close the door, but was quick witted enough not to do so.

"Want me, Jack?" he asked, suavely. He was of the full-fed type of saloon man, a sort of a near-broker in appearance. "Come on in and join us."

"Thanks," said Lanagan, shortly. "Just ate. I was curious to see who Bannerman was dining with. That's all."

The dry Martini struck the table suddenly and slopped over. "What a miserable, weak sister of a crook!" thought Lanagan. "I can admire a big crook, but this breed!"

"Why, my dear Mr. Lanagan!" exclaimed Ban-

nerman, coming forward so hastily his napkin trailed behind him from his collar, where it had been tucked. "I just met my old friend William quite accidentally. We went to school together, you know. I seldom see him nowadays."

To hear the notorious "Billy" Fogarty called William made Lanagan smile. Fogarty himself had difficulty repressing his grin.

"Judge," said Lanagan, smoothly, "you lie. Don't try to peddle any of that stuff on me. You see him about three times a week right here in this room, and you regulate your court calendar by what he tells you. I had very particular reasons for wondering whether you were here to-night. I see you are. So-long, Billy. Enjoy that wine, Judge. But you better order another Martini."

Before either could make reply he backed away from the door and left the café.

"Pretty fair start," he muttered to himself, grimly. "A judge with Bannerman's appreciation of newspapers will have a lively understanding of the mess I caught him in. If there is anything wrong here, there will be a get-together of some sort quick."

His thoughts swung back to the case in hand.

"The man who was big enough to take that woman away from the night life and make her his wife, was not the man who was killing their child," he repeated to himself, with stubborn reiteration. And yet there could not be found hitherto the slight-

est sherd of motive on the part of anyone else to account for the killing.

And yet, so far as Lanagan's investigations had gone on the case, Peters' record was found to be ordinary enough, and neither in his life nor that of his family was there anything irregular to be discovered that would create the barest suspicion of any person seeking to strike at him through the child. There could be found not the slightest sherd of motive on the part of anyone else to account for the killing.

The life of the wife began with the meeting with Peters. What her heritage was or her history before that time, proved a problem absolutely insoluble to Lanagan and the police: although the police, for their part, did little save work to fasten the crime on the husband, even the brilliant Leslie, greatest chief of his time, taking that line.

The records of the night life are unwritten, save where the requiescat is inscribed when a callous deputy coroner blots the entry at the morgue. Who she was before she came into the brooding shadow of the night lights was a secret that, if any of the wastrels there knew, they guarded. It is more than likely that they did not know. It is a great, wide way, the entrance there. She had come by that way one of a multitude; into the shadows and out. Whether she went out for happiness or ill, whether to a free life or a sombre death, few there cared to ask, even if they recalled her at all.

Ceaselessly Lanagan had searched that district.

He could trace her back to the time when Peters met her and no further. That incident had made some trifling stir merely because the "guy who got 'copped' on Gracie" had taken her away and really married her; or so they had heard.

Otherwise she had come into that Tenderloin district as many of her transitory sisters, with a suit case; but whether from far or near no one could say.

The influences that were eager to land Peters in the penitentiary were unquestionably the same that murdered the child; so Lanagan argued under the spell of his new theory. They had not slain the mother, directly; but they may have shrewdly calculated the effect upon her, in her precarious condition, of the death of the child: knowledge of which could scarcely be kept from her.

"Let us suppose, then," mused Lanagan, "let us suppose that someone wanted the child out of the way and now wants the husband out of the way. It would be possible to hang him for that crime. In the present state of the public mind, and with Bannerman holding him to answer for murder, life is the least he will get. What happens? The child of 'Gracie Dubois' is dead. The husband is, or soon will be, civilly dead. She is dead: but that does not appear to have a moving cause. Why the child's death and the father's imprisonment? Undoubtedly so that someone may profit. But who? Who, concealed back of the shadows of the night lights, kept grim watch on

'Gracie Dubois'? Who was concerned with the fate of that poor wretched girl anxious only for redemption, for a decent life? What 'dead hand' is it that has slain her issue and blighted her poor hopes for happiness and her passionate ambition for motherhood?"

And Bannerman, with his high siik hat and his frock coat and his impeccable respectability, came before him insistently; Bannerman, with his dry Martini and his quart of wine and his vis-a-vis dinner with "William" Fogarty.

Many thoughts that apparently flash into the mind spontaneously are but the products of a chain of thought carried consistently over a period of time.

It was so with Lanagan and his sudden theory of the "dead hand"; of a case that in some manner reverted back to a will or to an inheritance. He was rather surprised that the thought had not occurred sooner; but he had been busied with other thoughts and theories, and it was not until the way had been cleared that, in its logical time, that theory had suddenly struck him with conviction. And obviously it was the only theory that had not as yet been exploited by him; that some place back in the earlier life of that poor waif of the night life there might lie the solution of the crime — financial reasons for desiring to be rid of her progeny and her natural legatee, her husband.

The question intruded: why was not the hus-

band murdered as well? There might be many reasons, but one would answer: his imprisonment would suffice even if he were not executed; and if he managed to avoid any penalty, there would be time enough to see him.

And leading back to that "dead hand" theory of his, Lanagan could see but two links: Bannerman and Fogarty.

From the neighbourhood of the St. Germain he got me on the wire.

"Cover Fogarty's," he said. "Pick up some of the bunch and drop in casually. Keep your eye on him if he's there, and who he talks to. Spend money and get soberly drunk, if necessary to allay any suspicion that he is being watched. Get Sampson on the 'phone by ten o'clock. There may be a message for you."

I hadn't the faintest idea what it was all about, but Lanagan's voice was as snappy as a drill master. I went to the reporter's room at police headquarters and led a bunch to Fogarty's to rattle the dice for a round or two. It was pay night and money was free. If Fogarty, after he came in, had any suspicions of me — he knew that Lanagan and I always worked together — they were soon allayed. The dice rolled blithely for an hour or two with one of the boys dropping out occasionally to "cover" the police beat for the others while the play went on.

But nothing happened and I slipped away to get

Sampson on the 'phone. It was ten o'clock. He was didactic as usual, and as irritatingly brief: "Report to Lanagan. Room 802 Fairmont. Take the back stairs and make the room above all things without being seen."

That same old tingle that always shot up my spine when Lanagan was calling me in on the smash of one of his grand climaxes, shivered up to my hair roots. In a general way I knew the quest he was on, but that his search should have led him to the Fairmont hotel, on the very crest of aristocratic Nob Hill, was sufficient without further information to set my imagination humming.

The door was open and I entered, noiselessly. Lanagan was lying on the bed, smoking. He jumped up.

"Here," he said quickly, indicating a chair drawn up before the door leading to the adjoining room — they were suite rooms but used separately. "Sit there until I get back and take notes on what you hear. Keep your ear glued to that hole."

He had cut with his pocket knife an inch hole in the panelling of the door. He had whittled it so nicely that it was not quite cut entirely through. "You will find you can hear everything that is said in an ordinary tone of voice. There's no one in there now. An Englishman named Holmes has the room. Pretty soon I expect him and Larry Leighton in there with a girl. I am going out and get hold of Leslie. Lock the door after me and

keep your ears open for us when we get back. I won't knock, but will turn the handle once or twice."

"What's the lay?" I asked.

"No time to talk now," he flung back over his shoulder, and was gone.

It was probably twenty minutes later when the occupants of the adjoining room entered. There were two men and a woman. I could distinguish perfectly Leighton's sonorous voice. He had been a lawyer of standing in years gone by, but lately had been involved in one or two transactions a trifle "shady" in character, chiefly pertaining to the administration of estates; but nothing had ever been proved against him nor had the matter ever got into such shape that the papers could use it. So far as the general public was concerned, he stood well enough.

"I felt I could not be wrong," Leighton was saying. "And I am glad that you are satisfied. It must be a source of great satisfaction to you, Miss Pendelton, to be restored to your name and inheritance."

"I am only sorry now it did not happen before poor father went," the girl replied, with a tremble in her voice, and I fancied she was crying.

"Personally," it was the Englishman's voice, "I am satisfied of the identity. But of course my principals in London will also have to be satisfied. It would be best to leave at once, I think, for Eng-

land. For the sake of the Pendelton name we must work secretly and quietly. I would not want the matter in the public prints for the world."

I was listening with such intentness that it was some time before the soft and insistent grating of the doorknob caught my attention. I tiptoed to the door. Lanagan entered. In another moment Leslie came in and after a few moments of interval, Brady and Wilson, two of Leslie's steadiest thief-takers, stepped in softly. There was big game afoot of some sort!

Leslie had his ear to the door. He remained there for some time, and then motioned Brady, who took his turn, followed by Wilson.

Lanagan was sitting on a corner of the little table, swinging his feet lazily, but following every move made by the officers, and watching every shade of expression in their faces. Leslie took another turn and a half smile played over Lanagan's face as that veteran Chief finally stepped over to him and put out his hand. Langan gripped it. Not a word was spoken. Motioning to Brady and Wilson, Leslie stepped out and we followed.

He rapped on the door to the adjoining room. Leighton opened it, a look of enquiry on his rotund features. As swiftly as though a swab had been rubbed over it, his look of enquiry shaded into one of alarm, as he recognised Leslie. We filed in and Wilson snapped the lock behind him and stood at the door, Brady walking quickly to the

window and taking his position there. Not a word had as yet been spoken. Leighton stood as though stupefied. The Englishman, a dapper, well-dressed man of probably forty, smoking a cigarette at ease, raised his brows as we entered, but said nothing.

On the edge of the bed the girl was sitting, her wide eyes following Leslie. It was evident that she knew him by sight. Her resemblance to Mrs. Peters was striking. Both were women of that blonde, doll-faced type so frequently found in the night life.

"Leighton," said Leslie, "the jig is up."

Leighton sank into a chair. The Chief went to the connecting door, tapped for a moment, and then jabbed his knife through Lanagan's ear hole.

"See?" he said, laconically. "We've been listening there for thirty minutes. Gertrude Pendelton is dead; you know she is dead and her child with her. And this woman here," turning sharply to the girl, "knows that she is not Gertrude Pendelton. She knows perfectly well that she is playing a crooked 'lost heir' case for you, Leighton."

As though he had been a jack in the box, Holmes jumped to his feet.

"Heavens, Sir!" he cried, "why, what are you saying! Who are you?"

Leslie threw back his coat, displaying his diamond-studded shield.

"Chief of Police Leslie of San Francisco," he said, shortly.

With a swift movement the girl's hand went to her corsage and in a flash Lanagan had hurtled across the room and a tiny dagger spun to the floor. She threw herself back upon the bed, crying in sudden hysteria:

"You might have let me done it! You might have let me done it!" she wailed bitterly. Lanagan was wrapping up his hand. He had got the point of the dagger through the ball of his thumb in the rush. She jumped up again and threw herself at the feet of Leslie.

"It's my first crooked trick, so help me, Chief! He dragged me into it! What was I to do? It looked easy and it was a way out of the Tenderloin!"

Leighton was glancing heavily, his lips apart, from the door to the window as though planning an attempt to escape by either means.

"You've been shading pretty close on one or two things lately, Leighton," said the Chief grimly. "But I didn't think you had it in you to take a chance at the scaffold."

"What do you mean by that, Chief?" gasped Leighton, with a sickly attempt at composure.

"He means," thundered Lanagan, "that you are the man back of the murder of the real Gertrude Pendelton's child, and the indirect killing of Gertrude Pendelton, who was Mrs. Peters! He means

that you are the man back of Fogarty, who is the man who secured the conviction, in Bannerman's court, of Peters. That's what he means!"

Lanagan wheeled on the Englishman.

"How much money have you already paid Leighton?"

"One thousand pounds for producing this girl. He was to get four thousand more when final proof of identity was accepted by my principals in London."

Leslie and Lanagan exchanged glances. It was big pickings for Larry Leighton. Twenty-five thousand dollars in all; properly handled by Fogarty, it would go a long way to grease the wheels of justice in the police court.

Leighton arose, shaking like a palsied man, and tottered, rather than walked, to the Chief. He extended his wrists.

"Put on the bracelets, Chief," he said, in a voice that was but a shadow of his rich voice. "I took my chances, I'll take my medicine. The girl hasn't done anything yet you can hold her on. She knows nothing about the other thing. The doctors had given me two years to live — kidneys gone — and I saw a chance for a big clean-up and the German springs. It might have saved me."

"Big!" interrupted the Englishman, awed, "one hundred and fifty thousand pounds!"

"That's all, Chief," resumed Leighton. "I did the trick with the child myself, I wouldn't trust

anybody else. The night was pitch black and there are no houses right near there, you know. I waited till the old lady went out. After I finished the child, I was going to get the mother, but the front gate slammed. It was Peters coming home. I slipped out the back door again. I wanted the husband out of the way, on general principles. I did not know what his wife might have told him and he was better off, in case any publicity attended the restoration of the girl here, where he couldn't squeak, in case his wife had ever told him her real name and story.

"This girl here, a Tenderloiner, that I picked up because she looks a good bit like Mrs. Peters, seemed to have nerve enough for the deal, and she was to collect the estate and give me half. It was a big gamble. You're right about the scaffold, Chief. I never took any such chance before, but this was a 'get-away' stake for life for me, and I took it.

"I had no direct dealings with Bannerman. There's nothing on him. I had talks with Fogarty but paid no money. In a general way he gathered I wanted the man across, and I guess he gathered, too, that there would be a big clean-up all around at the end of it. There's no case on anybody except myself."

"Nothing on Bannerman or Fogarty that would make a case in court, possibly," said Lanagan, curtly, "but plenty that the *Enquirer* can

print. You're loyal to your pals, Leighton."

It appeared that Leighton, through a newspaper advertisement, got into communication with the London firm of lawyers of which Holmes was the confidential representative. They had a theory that the girl they sought had gone to San Francisco. A runaway at the age of fifteen, Gertrude Pendelton had been estranged from her father. She had taken the downward path, but the father, relenting on his death bed, willed his estate to her, and his executors had for months been endeavouring to locate her.

Leighton immediately began his plotting to foist an impostor upon the executors and their lawyers. It must be remembered that they had accepted him as a reputable lawyer. He had made a secret trip to England and had secured a fairly complete record of the places the Pendeltons had lived in while the daughter was still with them. Originally residents of various parts of the British possessions, the family had settled at Applegate, where the mother died, the father following her some months later. At Applegate there were none who had ever known the daughter. Leighton's investigations in England failed to reveal anyone who had in fact ever known her, the Pendeltons only coming to England to settle down there a few years before.

To Leighton's scheming brain, the thing looked perfectly simple.

The murder plot was secondary. It had been

his original plan to find the real Gertrude Pendleton and if possible strike some bargain with her. Equipped with a picture of her taken at the age of fifteen, he had finally traced her, to find her respectably married. Consequently, it was hardly likely that he could strike any combination with her that would give him the "haul" that he sought to make. Then, with her alive, there was always danger that she would disclose her identity to her husband. When the child came along, Leighton, keeping close tab on the Peters, concluded that inevitably motherly pride in the redeemed woman would bring about an attempt at a family reconciliation. Then would come to her the knowledge of her father's death and of her own inheritance.

He determined on one bold stroke: kill mother and child on the gamble that what did happen, would happen: that the husband would be accused.

With the husband safely imprisoned, or possibly executed, his path with the impostor would be unimpeded. He had coached his impostor well on the information gained on his English trip.

So much for Leighton's story. Lanagan's story was startlingly simple. After telephoning for me to cover Fogarty's, he had returned to watch the St. Germain. Fogarty finally came out and Lanagan shadowed him to the Mills building. He came from there shortly, in company with Leighton, and Lanagan, still in the grasp of his "dead hand"

theory, and knowing Leighton by sight, and his reputation in the inner circles for tangling up in estate cases, dropped Fogarty and followed Leighton. He went directly to the Fairmont. When he went to the desk to call for Holmes, Lanagan was close at his side. Leighton did not know him by sight. Learning which room Holmes had, Lanagan was fortunate in securing an unoccupied room adjoining, and he was in his room ten minutes after Leighton had entered Holmes'. Being fortunate enough to get the room merely hastened the climax, because the case was already clearing in Lanagan's mind.

His ear to the keyhole of the door connecting the two rooms — many of the rooms in that hotel are so joined, to permit of them being thrown into suites — he had heard a fragment of conversation here and there, and knew that Leighton was bringing a girl for the Englishman's examination who was being sought as a missing English heir. Finally the Englishman, shortly after eight o'clock, had concluded to go with Leighton to bring her, desirous evidently of satisfying himself that she was in the Tenderloin, which seemed to be a point in their argument.

With Holmes and Leighton out of their room, Lanagan had set to work to whittle a hole in the door for better hearing facilities, and then had sent the message to Sampson that brought me to his room.

To Lanagan's ranging mind, the thing was as clear as print. He had traced his connection past Fogarty down to the last figure in the combination. It was a "long shot," perhaps, that Leighton had put the real heir out of the way in order to impose an imposture on the estate and thus divide probably a full half; but it was on "long shots" that Lanagan's extraordinary brain usually won out.

The narratives were ended. Lanagan turned to Leslie:

"I want Peters here, Chief, to give the last note to my story. To prevent any 'leak' from the county jail, I will have Haddon get Superior Judge Dunlevy to telephone a verbal order of release to the jail for Peters to be brought to the city to see his council. It's rather unusual, but has been done before, and Dunlevy will do it. I think I'll get Haddon in for the finals, too. He's been in the case pretty deep."

It was probably an hour later before Haddon dropped into the room. He had sent a machine for Peters, Dunlevy telephoning the order. A few moments later Peters, in charge of a deputy sheriff, entered and in brief and business-like fashion the facts were laid before him. It was a little too much for him to grasp all at once.

When he finally did, it was the Englishman who brought matters to a business basis by remarking:

"Leighton certainly seems to have been extremely positive about the identity of Mrs. Peters.

Did you know that she was Gertrude Pendelton?"

"Sir," said Peters, "I married my wife as I found her, and I asked no questions. She made me a good wife. She never talked about herself or her people."

"Did she have any keepsakes, any old trinkets, any pictures?"

Peters unbuttoned his shirt. "Only this," he said, producing a locket attached to a fine gold chain. "She asked me to wear it when she was taken to bed, and if anything happened, to give it to the babe. The police missed it in searching me. It's her father and mother, I think, although she never said."

With eager fingers Holmes opened the old-fashioned locket.

"It is Captain and Mrs. Pendelton," he said, simply. "He looks as he looked the day before his death." A silence fell upon the room, as he snapped the locket and, bowing profoundly, passed it back to Peters. He then continued:

"My mission here has certainly had a curious termination. I will remain until the court matters against you are all disposed of. I would suggest then that you return with me to London, so that you can be on the ground in the arrangements for transferring the estate to you."

"There will be no arrangements," said Peters. "I don't want the money."

The Englishman stared incredulously.

"Don't want it! Don't want one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, three quarters of a million dollars? It will escheat to the Crown if you refuse it."

"Let it then," said Peters, stubbornly. "I don't want it. Why should I take something my wife didn't want? There must be something wrong about it somewhere. Why should I make money by the death of my wife and child? If she were here to share it — if only my boy were here —"

He broke down for the first time since his arrest, and sobbed, throwing his arms over his head in a wild burst of grief. Final' he composed himself.

"I'll go back to my trade," he said, simply. "Hard work is the best thing for me now."

He turned to Lanagan and their hands met in a long, hard clasp.

"If it can be done, I'll turn the money over to you, Mr. Lanagan."

"Thanks, Peters, no. I've only done a newspaperman's work; what the *Enquirer* pays me to do. You're all man; and it's been a pleasure to clear you."

To Leslie, again the master newspaper mind, calculating the minutes swiftly slipping around after midnight, he snapped:

"It's in your hands now, Chief. Keep everybody here and stall around for an hour or so, while Norton and I give the town a story that, if it

doesn't make a case in court against Fogarty and Bannerman, will at least chase Fogarty out of town till it blows over and beat Bannerman out of the nomination for Superior Judge. His name comes before the convention to-morrow night. We're off."

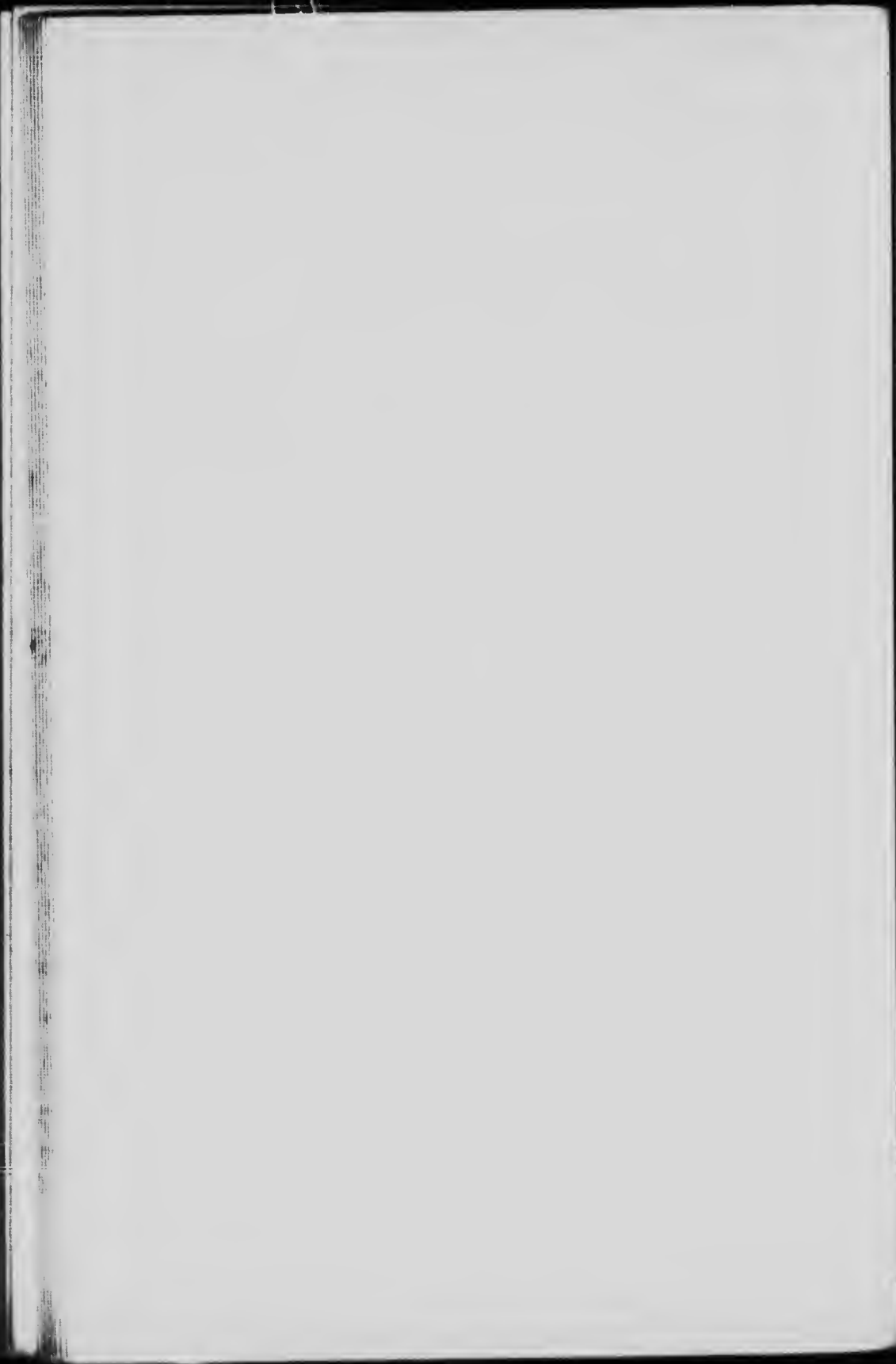
Then to me as we swiftly pelted out of the room:

"Key up to it, Norrie; this is some stemwinder!"



VIII

AT THE END OF THE LONG NIGHT



VIII

AT THE END OF THE LONG NIGHT

“**E**XTRA! EXTRA!” in shrill diminuendo awakened Jack Lanagan from the very heart of his morning slumber. The morning paper man sleeps late and nothing short of cataclysm or the cry of an extra is likely to awaken him. Lanagan was from his bed to the window in a lanky leap hailing the newsboy.

It was the *Evening Record* with a “screamer” head and two hundred words of black-face type. Lanagan swept through it in a comprehensive flash. With more speed than was his custom he thereupon dressed.

“*Swanson!*” he said. “Gad, what a story!”

He sat on the edge of the bed, more leisurely to roll a brown-paper cigarette and read the story more carefully. Stripped of flaring headlines, it was as follows:

“All hope for the safety of Captain Robert Swanson, the retired millionaire shipping man who disappeared on Wednesday evening, was dissipated this morning, shortly after 9.30 o'clock, when the body of the well-known philanthropist was found in a subcellar room in the notorious Palace Hotel in Chinatown.

"Death was due to strangulation.

"Life had probably been extinct three days, and it is the police theory that Captain Swanson went directly to the hotel or was lured there on the evening of his disappearance.

"His watch and valuables were found on his person.

"So far as a hasty examination could discover no one saw him enter the hotel, which bears an evil reputation and is occupied by the lowest type of denizen of Chinatown and the Barbary Coast.

"The room where the body was found is one of several that have been dug out beneath the basement and is used entirely by opium smokers.

"Chief of Police Leslie has ordered all available detectives on the case and arrests are expected at any moment."

"Which means," finally grumbled Lanagan, "that I get no day off to-morrow to split a quart of Chianti with mine host Pastori.

"Swanson," he ran quickly back in his mind, "is president of the Seamen's Bank; director of the Cosmos Club; director of a dozen corporations; trustee of his church; sound as a nut at sixty-five; solidly established in the old conservative families of Nob Hill, with a family of married children likewise solidly established in the solidest kind of respectability and a wife who is a silvery-haired saint if there ever was one.

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"Yet he, a man who probably didn't know such a place as Chinatown's Palace Hotel existed until that night, is found dead in the lowest sink of that hole. The extremes of the social system met in his end and the place of it."

The Chinatown Palace Hotel of the days just before the fire gave that quarter of San Francisco obliteration, the one thing that could cleanse it, was a sorry second to the pretentious hostelry on Market Street. A ramshackle structure, illy lit through its crooked corridors and musty rooms with ancient gas jets, it looked more, in its complete dirt and dinginess, like an exaggerated rabbit warren. Three stories above ground and one or two below, cut up into rooms, the largest not more than eight by ten, the smallest just large enough for a bunk and an opium layout, it had survived by some miracle the health authorities to hive in musty murk the off-scourings of a city. Once, when Portsmouth Square was the civic centre, it had harboured the kings of the early gold days.

The rooms were larger in those days; the front suites that gave ease to the idling, new-made Cræsus had long since been cut up into five, six, seven, or eight, as the increasing congestion of the quarter threw an increasing swarm of vermin to its recesses.

Save for white "dope fiends," known in the vernacular of the police as "hops," "cokes," or "morphs," users of opium, cocaine, or morphine,

it was inhabited solely by Chinese, some of them coolie labourers, but the most of them likewise "fiends."

Below the basement floor were a dozen rooms not high enough for a man to stand erect in. The light of day never entered. What light they received came from one main gas jet in the corridor or the occasional flash of a policeman's pocket light as the Chinatown squad made their rounds. Save for the members of the squad, and at times a jaded police reporter, idling from the reporters' room in the near-by Hall of Justice on a quiet night through the district with the squad sergeant, it is probable no white man save the "fiends" of the district had ever before gasped for breath in that foul den — no white man, that is, before Captain Robert Swanson, who entered there one night never to emerge. It was three days before one of the denizens of the subcellar, finally realising that the occupant of the next bunk was not in the stupor of drug but the stitiness of death, made his way with frantic hippity-hoppings to the first member of the squad he could find and reported the matter, not forgetting to whine for his ten cents for so doing.

Such, in substance, were the facts in the mystery that set the city and the coast — Swanson was a notable figure in shipping circles — in a ferment for a week.

For, more than the initial fact of finding the body in Chinatown's cesspool, five days had now

elapsed with not one single additional fact of consequence to clear the mystery. Suspects without number had been jailed. Every ex-convict, "fiend," vagrant, or questionable character of the district, white, yellow, or black, male or female, had been put through the police mill. The opium dens had been emptied of their wastrels, blinking like bats in the light of day. Swanson's past and his present life were run under a high-power lens; his servants' and his employees' lives and the lives of his former servants and former employees; Chief Leslie was a fellow member of the Cosmos Club with Swanson, and if any additional good to his natural police pride were necessary to spur him on, that afforded it. Every recourse that police experience could adapt or devise was applied.

Always there was lacking motive: that mainspring for crime.

That Swanson had by any chance been addicted to the drug habit was early dismissed. Practically every hour of his methodical life could be accounted for for months back.

But in so far as his movements were concerned from the moment he left his doorstep on Wednesday evening until the body was found, he may as well have left his doorstep invested in an invisible mantle, for no living person that could be located had seen him alive.

There was one peculiar circumstance. He had worn that night a heavy ulster overcoat, although

the night had not been chilly, and Mrs. Swanson had remarked on it at parting. The coat was not found with the body.

It is not exaggeration to say that in physical output Lanagan worked harder than any three reporters or detectives during the first five days of the case. He did not take me into his confidence: he seldom did until the "smash" approached on any story. He smoked eternally or chewed to pulp his own select brand of rank Manilas, or consumed innumerable cigarettes. Lanagan never had to bother with the daily routine of a story; that was all left to me. His work was the big "feature" stuff. He might not write a line for a week and then he would saunter into the picture with a news sensation that would upend the town.

But there seemed to be no "upending" on this case. During the five days that had elapsed the big portion of the work had fallen to me. Lanagan had absolutely not turned a trick. On Wednesday evening at midnight, as I turned in my story for the day, identical as I felt it would be with the other two morning papers, Lanagan 'phoned me to meet him at the Hall of Justice.

I drifted down there.

"I just wanted to tell you," was his greeting, "that I am going to disappear. Don't look for me. I will discover myself when the time comes. I'm going to lose myself up in Chinatown, for the solution of that story is there, and I'm not coming

until I've landed something and choked off the side remarks of the *Times* and *Herald* outfit, if I stay there for the balance of my natural life. The police can hang as they please to their hoary old dogma that a 'hop head' never commits murder. Just because they're so positive, I am going to take the other tack; at least until I have proved their theory to my own satisfaction. There isn't a man outside the frequenters of this quarter knew of that subcellar and that's the theory I am going to stick with now. Keep in pretty close touch with the office so I can get you in a hurry if anything turns up. Good-by."

In another moment he was walking rapidly up Washington Street to disappear down Dupont, out of sight for three days.

The story had run eight days and a dearth of fresh angles had thinned it out a trifle, when, on Saturday evening, along about ten o'clock, as I hung around the local room hoping against hope for a call from Lanagan, it came.

"Meet me in front of old St. Mary's," he said, shortly, and I thrilled instantly with that same premonitory tremor that always came over me when the climax was on. I sped down Kearney Street and in the shadow of the church steps picked him up.

"Dorrett is watching me," he said. "He's been covering me for days." Dorrett was the oldest special policeman in Chinatown and generally held

to be a "leak" for the *Herald* through personal friendship for a former police reporter, now city editor of that paper. In such fashion do papers develop their "sources" of news. "I have one clue that may be the key to the solid brick wall we have been up against. And I am not going to lose that key to the *Herald* via Dorrett," concluded Lanagan, as he suddenly stepped fully into the glare of the gas street lamp on the corner just as Dorrett sidled up. I saw that Lanagan had deliberately exposed himself.

"Really, Dorrett," he remarked in that sinister tone he could assume so well on occasion, "some of these days I shall actually trip over you if you persist in blundering beneath my feet. You might fall quite hard in that case and hurt yourself. However, just tell Cartwright" (city editor of the *Herald*) "that I am going to hand him a package of nitroglycerin right on your own particular little bailiwick, will you? Please run along now, like a good little special policeman, because we are going to lose you — thusly."

He turned on his heel and ran for a California Street car just lumbering past us up the hill and I followed suit. After a few blocks he crossed through the car and dropped off on the other side. Scouting cautiously back toward Chinatown by way of Washington Street, drifting along with eyes wide for Dorrett, we finally made Ross Alley, where Lanagan stopped for a fraction of a second

at the wicket of the gambling house at No. 8.

At that time it was a strict rule of the gambling "joints" that a white man could not enter. Personally, for all of my four years' dabbling around on police, I never had been able to enter a Chinese gambling house when the play was on. Yet the lookout flashed one glance at Lanagan, grinned yellowly and ingenuously, and the massive solid oak door before us swung noiselessly open and we passed quickly through. As it shut behind us I heard a faint click-click, and glanced back. Three separate two-by-four scantlings, heavily re-enforced with iron, had dropped back into their sockets. The door was as solid as a concrete wall against the axes of the Chinatown squad; the theory being that by the time the squad had the door battered down, the players had departed through some secret runway.

"Melodrama?" laughed Lanagan at me. "But I had to come by the back door, as it were. I wouldn't like to have any stray police or reporters or Dorrett suspect I was about to interview the man I am. They might smell a rat, possibly. We are more isolated among these hundred Chinks, gambling their fool heads off, than we would be in one of Leslie's dark cells."

We passed directly through the long room with its eight high tables, at each of which ten or a dozen impassive Celestials, with chopsticks, beans, and teacups, stood engaged in the contraband pas-

time of fantan. At a table or two a pie gow game was running, and in a corner dominoes. The air was so heavy and heated that I felt the perspiration starting in an instant. The Chinese gambler, if he is winning, sticks in that thick atmosphere for hours at a time.

At the rear of the room was another door, likewise barred in triplicate. Here another lookout grinned friendly at Lanagan and pressed on an innocent-appearing nail head in the wainscoting and the bars dropped and the door opened to a steep ladder. We went down about ten feet into a blind areaway between two buildings.

It was as black as your derby hat. But Lanagan, the marvellous, stepped ahead with assurance and I followed him gropingly. In another moment he rapped faintly on what I took to be a section of the brick base of the building, a click sounded, he took me by the arm, pulled me after him, another click, and the next moment a blaze of electric light discovered us to be in a small lounging room elaborately appointed in Oriental furnishings.

“Hullo, Mist’ Lamagum!”

The voice came from a corpulent, twinkling-eyed, richly garbed Chinaman just arisen from a massive chair of ebony and mother-of-pearl.

“Hello, Fu,” said Lanagan, sinking into another massive chair and motioning me to do likewise.

“My friend Norton, Fu. Norton, Mr. Fu Wong, otherwise known to me as Why Because.

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You will understand 'why because' presently."

"Why? Becaus'? I tell you," said Fu Wong, chuckling. "Him funny boy, Mist' Lamagum. He, whatyoucalem, jolly me. You likem smoke?" He pressed a button on the arm of his chair and a flowing-garbed Chinese boy appeared with rich Havanas on a tray, together with individual teacups and two-piece teapots for three.

"Did you find See Wong?" Lanagan asked abruptly, while I studied Fu, whom I knew by reputation as one of the Chinese merchant princes. "I am in a hurry, Fu."

"I catchem. He say Charley drive aut-o-mob-eel. Charley live there three, fo' wicks. She cry one time See bringem tea: 'Oh, Charley! Charley! Why fo' you do him? What's mala you, Charley?' She stop quick see See. Why? Becaus'? See, he donno. He say Charley he usem, what you call 'em? Hop."

For the first time since this story broke, that singular flashing, almost like a cat's eyes, flamed into Lanagan's dark eyes and they shot a responsive glimmer of high tension interest through me, because I knew that at last he had struck the trail.

"You have done more for me than I can ever repay," said Lanagan at parting. "You are a remarkable man, Fu Wong."

Fu laughed broadly.

"Why? Becaus'? You save my sto' good name? I help you."

As we went back out the way we came in, Lanagan enlightened me.

“Fu is president of the Suey Sing Tong. There is a Chinaman, Swanson's cook, See Wong, whom I have been hammering on for two days. Of all the household servants, I have a vague suspicion of him. I couldn't land him. Finally I looked up his affiliation, found he was a Suey Sing man, and then I enlisted the services of Fu Wong. See Wong would have to talk to his tong leader where the police or the reporters couldn't drag information out of him with a team of mules. He purely and simply wouldn't 'sabe,' and that's all the satisfaction you could get.

“‘Why Because' is not only proprietor of one of the biggest bazaars here and a director of the Chinese Bank, but he is also proprietor — I am telling you Chinatown secrets and not to be repeated — of the gambling house we came through and several others. He is one of the powers of the quarter.

“There was an English tourist robbed in his bazaar once of a couple of hundred dollars and I was sent up here. Fu laboured under the impression that the entire sixteen pages of the *Enquirer* were going to be turned over to that particular robbery. He felt the disgrace of the thing keenly, as any high-class Chinaman would, and personally offered the Englishman back the money. That was a good story. For some reason Fu, not understand-

ing the American newspaper idea of 'human interest,' elected to think I had written a eulogy of him deliberately. I could have had half his store at that time, I guess, if I had wanted it. But I took a cigar and a cup of tea, and ever since that time I have been taken inside the inner circle up here. The room we were in is a runway through the basement of the bazaar next door in case of a raid.

" 'Charley' was a chauffeur named Thorne, employed by Mrs. Swanson about three months ago for several weeks. He was one of the numerous wastrels that that woman of unostentatious but magnificent charities had under her protection. There are scores in and about the city, men and women, boys and girls, that she had taken from the under side of life and put on top. I didn't see him, but some of Leslie's men did and found nothing suspicious. Had they known he was a 'hop,' however, they might have thought differently. It establishes a very clear apparent connection between Swanson and the Palace Hotel and the only definite clue that has been turned up. We will save a lot of time by getting his address from Leslie."

Lanagan was through with Leslie in a few moments.

"He is going home, but will be on tap with Brady and Wilson if we need him later," he said. "He got curious when I mentioned Thorne, but promised to lay off until he heard from me. Thorne lives at Lombard and Larkin, where, in view of

Mrs. Swanson's undoubted suspicion that he committed the crime, coupled with See Wong's charge that he is a 'hop,' we will now proceed to call on him."

We were there in a few moments. It was a squalid lodging house, in charge of a slatternly bel-dam. She didn't know whether Thorne was in or not. He was kind of loony, lately, she thought.

"Too bad," said Lanagan, genially. "Has Charley been so that he couldn't be out the last week? He wasn't feeling well last time I saw him."

"Ain't seen much of him this week," she replied. "I didn't know about it, but I am beginnin' to think he is one of them there fiends. He is actin' something awful sometimes lately, what with his skip-pin's and hoppin's. You can go on up."

The door was locked, but it was a rickety affair and the lock yielded to the pressure of our shoulders. A man who might have been any age from twenty to forty swung himself to a sitting position on a disordered bed and glared at us with eyes that were wide open but only half seeing.

"Full of hop; and I might as well jam him on a gamble," said Lanagan, in an aside to me as he stepped quickly over and pulled Thorne to his feet, slapped him across the face, and sat him down in a chair. A high-pitched, querulous protest was voiced at the treatment, and then Thorne whimpered:

"Oh, you are so cruel! What have I ever done to be treated so cruelly?" He began to cry.

"Done? You snivelling viper, put on your shoes and come with me to jail. You murdered Robert Swanson and you are going to hang for it. Get up and come along." Again Lanagan caught him a sharp slap across the face. This time Thorne did not whimper. A look of cunning came into his eyes.

"Getting your wits back pretty quick, now, eh?" sneered Lanagan.

Thorne stared. It seemed for a moment his clouded eyes entirely cleared; and then the film of the drug-sodden brain fell over his eyes again, and he relapsed to his hunched position. He was shivering and rocking himself, his angular knees drawn up to his chin, clasped around with his arms.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" His voice was pitched high again like a woman's. "Why is everyone so cruel to me? I am very nervous, as you can see, gentlemen. I really need something to quiet my nerves. It is the doctor's orders, really. Would it be asking too much, now, to ask for the loan of ten cents? Oh, dear —"

"*Thorne!*" Lanagan, his aspect actually ferocious, leaped before the half-arisen suppliant. I shrank back myself, his acting was so consummately done.

"I'll give you ten cents, you viper! You murdering, crawling, poisonous viper! I'll give you the condemned cell at San Quentin and the death watch and the black cap, and the quick drop, until

they crack that snake's neck of yours into a dozen pieces! That's what I'll give you!"

Chattering, jabbering incoherently, his long, lean, sharp-nailed, claw-like hands working spasmodically before his face and toward Lanagan, the fiend huddled back. He glanced from side to side, his head lolling, as though seeking some avenue of escape by a desperate leap.

Lanagan's eyes were within a foot of his face. Thorne began to foam at the mouth. I thought he was going into a fit as I watched, fascinated, the horrible scene. Bearing down upon the wretch with savagery in his voice and manner, Lanagan hammered on:

"Give you ten cents! What do you want with ten cents? You'll never get another shot of coke as long as you live, Thorne! Never in this world! You are coming with me now, coming where you will never need coke again! Coming to your death by hanging for murder! *Not another shot in all this world will you ever get!*"

With a shriek that was more animal's than man's, Thorne suddenly lunged forward. Quicker than the dart of a snake's head, those hands, with their long, lean, writhing fingers, had twisted around Lanagan's neck. With a strength that was the strength of temporary insanity, he flung Lanagan from him and fell with him. Then, like a lean gorilla, he shook Lanagan's head from side to side while he screeched fearful imprecations.

"You lie! You lie! I'll get all I want! That's what he said, and I killed him, and I'll kill you, too! Yah! Yeeah!" He trailed away into a maniacal scream.

I hurled myself at him, but the fiend, for the moment at least, had the strength of three men. I finally managed to get in a blow that settled him.

Lanagan, rubbing his bruised neck ruefully, rose slowly. He was panting a little but chuckling.

"Score one for mental suggestion on a weak subject," he laughed. "But I didn't figure those scrawny hands had quite that much strength. This murder is clearer than print. We all but re-enacted the scene.

"Now, my boy, to establish the connection that would bring a man of Swanson's position to a rendezvous at the Palace, to arouse the slumbering demon in this human orang-utang. It's rather a commentary on that hoary police doctrine that a dope fiend never commits murder. I was right."

Within thirty minutes Chief Leslie and Brady, and Wilson, his right-hand men, were in the room, and Lanagan swiftly detailed the circumstances. Thorne had come to and was shaking and shivering as the drug wore out of his system, leaving him nerve-racked. He did not attempt to repudiate his utterance, but sullenly admitted the murder.

In view of the words overheard by See Vong, there was but one person to clear up the mystery.

Leslie, Lanagan and I hurried in the chief's machine to the Swanson home, nearly midnight as it was. That they had had Thorne once under examination and had permitted him to go was a source of bitter chagrin to the chief. Thorne showed none of the ravages of the habit that men of weaker physique exhibited; the day the police picked him up he had happened to be comparatively normal, and consequently he had passed safely through the quiz.

Mrs. Swanson had not yet retired, and, upon learning that the chief was one of her late callers, summoned us at once to the drawing-room. She had one of those splendid faces seen occasionally in the aged, where strength of mind or religious fervour has brought endurance of lifelong secret pain of body or soul. The calmness of a noble resignation looked forth in a slight clouding of her clear eyes and expressed itself in the faint traces of suppression about her mobile lips. The gleaming, snow-white hair, combed straight back from a forehead of a remarkable breadth in a woman, invested her like an aureole.

She was a woman probably of sixty years.

"You will appreciate, gentlemen, I trust," she said in a low voice of refined modulation, "that I have endured much and am still suffering."

"It is a very painful errand we are on, Mrs. Swanson, and we will endeavour to be brief," said Lanagan in a voice that a Chesterfield might have envied for courteous inflection and gentleness of

expression, "but nevertheless it is an errand that must be performed." He glanced at the chief, who nodded.

"Speaking as a newspaper man," continued Lanagan, "it is my wish at all times to spare the feelings of those, particularly women, with whom I am brought into relation. But the true newspaper man is a seeker after truth, and he must follow as definite a path as the police follow."

There was an eloquent pause. She gazed from one to the other during the interim, as though striving to read their thoughts. It was evident that the undercurrent that these skilled cross-examiners intended to convey had carried home.

"Well?" finally. Neither Lanagan nor Leslie spoke. There was another pause. She said at last: "You have some information to impart to me? Or some information to seek?"

"We desire to inform you," said Leslie slowly, and with just a shade more of hardness in his tone as the detective began to work in him, "that we have under arrest the confessed murderer of your husband."

She leaned involuntarily forward in her chair and grasped the arms so hard that her knuckles showed white through the fair skin of her hands.

"And we desire to inform you," added Lanagan quickly, "that the name of your husband's murderer is Charles Thorne; and we desire to ask you what the motive was for the murder of your hus-

band by Charles Thorne; *and why, when you suspected that Charles Thorne was the murderer, you did not immediately notify the police?* ”

Her hands slowly relaxed their grip on the chair arms as she sank back into its depths. Curiously, in the way the light struck down at her hair and her face, it seemed that the beautiful halo of white that had invested her, and the delicate, well-preserved whiteness of her skin, turned suddenly to dirty grey. If ever the blight of age settled visibly in fact or in fiction, it settled upon her then.

“ You — have — Charles — Thorne — under — arrest? ” she said, and her very tone was grey. She did not deny the truth of the charge; she did not express satisfaction that the murderer was found; she merely asked whether they had Charles Thorne under arrest.

“ Yes. ”

Her eyes closed and her head dropped suddenly back against the chair. We stepped swiftly forward, but before we could take any measures to revive her, her eyes had opened again. The lips moved. She was speaking, but so gaspingly that we bent to hear.

“ It is the end of the long night, ” she said with many halts; “ the end of the long night. A life’s nightmare is done. God have mercy on me — ”

She stopped completely. Then:

“ God pity all mothers who bear as I bore — ”
Another long pause. She was by strong effort

retaining the clarity of her faculties under some heavy shock. She repeated:

“Who bear as I bore!”

The silence became acutely poignant.

“It must be told,” she breathed finally. “You have asked me why I did not tell you my suspicions. I will tell you now. Charles Thorne —”

Her next words came so low that had it not been for the pregnant silence of the great drawing-room they could not have been heard.

“*Is my son.*”

I found I had been holding my breath; and I glanced quickly at Lanagan, to see his breast falling with a deep exhalation.

“My husband did not know,” she continued, colourlessly. “Charles Thorne does not know I am his mother. I have tried to live a full Christian life. I have given by tens of thousands to aid the erring. I have thought to make all atonement. . . .”

“And yet the blood of my blood slew the heart of my heart, my dear husband, one of God’s noble men. . . .”

After that wrenching confession her normal poise began by degrees to return as the strength of an extraordinary mind began to assert itself. The story was soon told: of an alliance before her marriage to Swanson, of the boy, taken by the father, to be sent back to her after fifteen years. The dissolute father, on his deathbed, sent Charles back to the mother.

For fifteen years since that day she had steadily stood sponsor for the boy. To her husband he was but one of the many others of her objects of charity. It may be said the boy inherited the dissolute traits of his father. Finally, her own children by Swanson all marrying, that profound mysterious quality of motherhood prompted her to make one last effort to redeem the boy under her own eyes, and she adopted the dangerous course, for her, of bringing him to the house as a chauffeur.

That he was given to drugs she did not know. Thorne had been caught in a series of petty thefts. Swanson had finally been compelled to discharge him. He had left the house with maledictions upon Swanson. Instinctively she had felt he was the author of the crime.

Considering all of these circumstances, and understanding the character of the fiend and his paternity, it is evident that in his brain, constantly weakening under drugs, became fixed a sinister purpose to work out some scheme of revenge on Swanson for driving him from a rich home and a cozy living, with ample funds and opportunity for a secret indulgence in his weakness.

As it subsequently appeared, Thorne did not originally plan murder. Some abortive scheme of blackmail had but half formed in his crazy brain. He lured Swanson with a cunning letter, full of explicit directions, to the Palace Hotel by writing that he was seriously ill there. He begged that Mrs.

Swanson be not informed until after Swanson had seen him. He wanted an opportunity to redeem himself, he wrote; and Swanson, as warm-hearted as his wife, and not caring evidently to worry her needlessly about the condition of one of her charges until he had made an investigation, set out on his errand of humanity, never to return.

He wore his ulster, obviously so that he would not be recognised going alone into the Palace Hotel. In the subcellar he had met Thorne. There was a prolonged talk, and Swanson made the mistake of chiding the fiend on his habits. Desire coming upon him strongly, Thorne finally exhibited himself in all his ugly weakness, and the spectacle was too much for the eyes of Swanson, unaccustomed to such sights. He was stooping his way out of the little room after sternly refusing Thorne's appeal for money, when the long, lean fingers of the half-insane man, with some congenital strain outcropping perhaps of that vagabond, dissolute father, found an easy goal in a man already half-suffocated in the thick air of the place.

Alarmed, when his fit had passed, at what he had done, and fearing to rob the body, Thorne had quakingly slipped into Swanson's ulster and made his way in terror to his own room. First he had journeyed to the foot of Powell Street, weighted the coat with a rock, and cast it into the water of the bay. It was subsequently recovered and served as the single bit of incriminating evidence to substan-

tiate his confession. His letter to Swanson, in Swanson's pocket, he had taken with him to destroy by tearing into fine bits.

Such were the salient features of a most extraordinary crime as ultimately established.

But to return to Mrs. Swanson's drawing-room, where Lanagan is speaking:

"Charles Thorne does not know, then, that you are his mother?"

"He does not know."

"Who does know?"

"No living person save myself and you gentlemen."

"In that case, then, Mrs. Swanson," said Lanagan simply, "your secret will die with us."

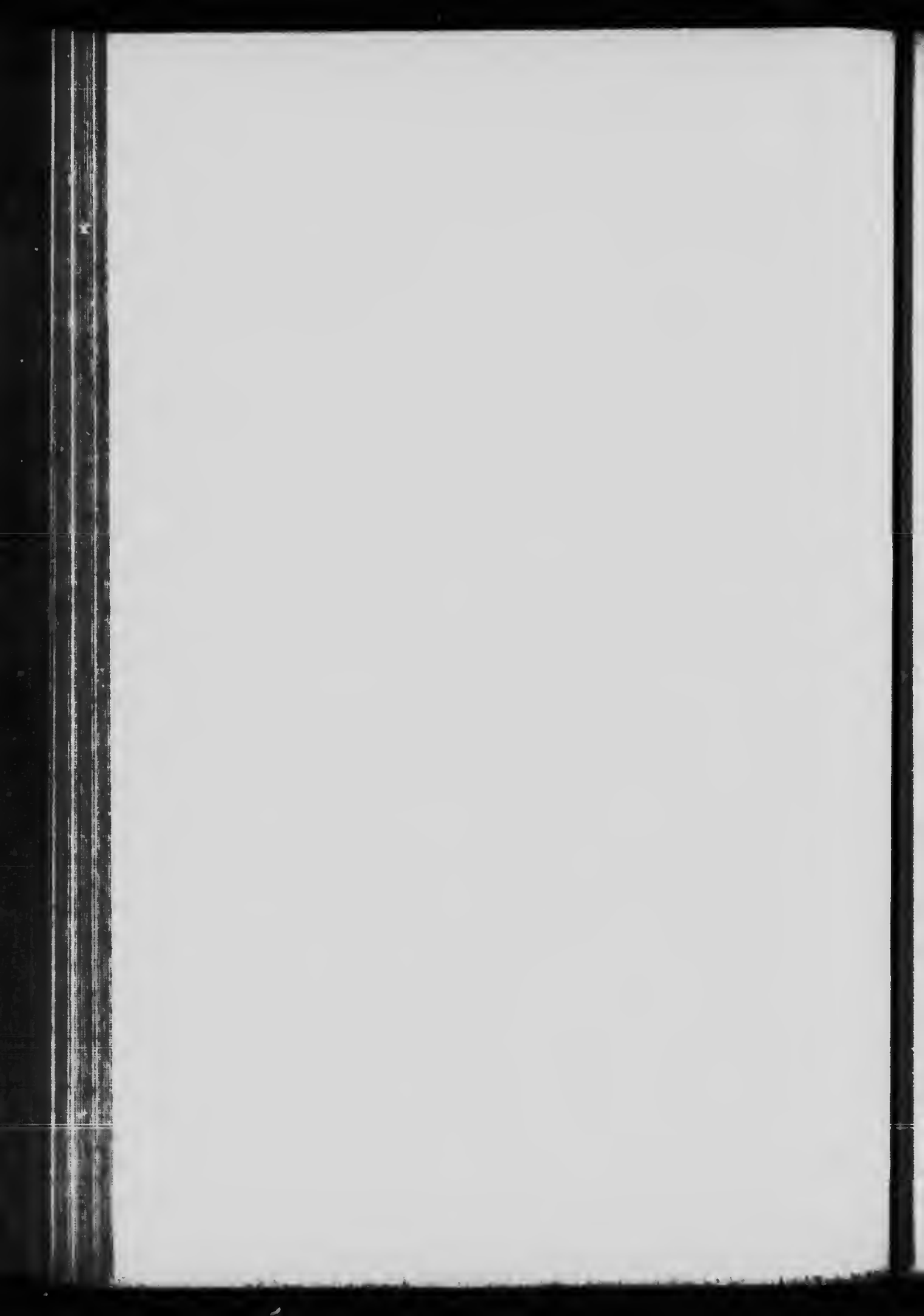
She choked in attempting to speak, and, tears streaming from her eyes, bade us each adieu. For my part I confess I was blinking like a boy. The outer doors closed behind us. Then:

"Back to the room for you, chief," snapped Lanagan laconically. "Throw Thorne in at 2:15, Charles Thorne, a former chauffeur, murdered Swanson after attempted blackmail failed. You stand, of course, chief?"

"Stand, Jack?" replied that sterling officer, "it's in so deep it can only come out when the last drop leaves my veins."

"I knew that," said Lanagan. "Now, Norrie," sharply, "get together! We have exactly *fifty-five minutes to press time!*"

THE DOMINANT STRAIN



THE DOMINANT STRAIN

“SAMPSON,” said Lanagan, “there’s something queer about that Robbins case. Professional second story men aren’t returning to the scene of a \$10,000 burglary and sending by messenger a written proposition to return the property for a cash settlement. They know how and where to negotiate the stuff and they take no chances; particularly not with one of their number under arrest — assuming the Ward boy is one of them. And that is another queer angle: seasoned crooks don’t operate with sixteen-year-old boys.”

“How do you account for the ring found on him?”

“I don’t — yet.”

“What’s your theory?”

“Haven’t any. But ten ‘second-story’ cases in three months in one district winding up with a \$10,000 job is against all form.”

“Dig into it then. Here, see who this is as you go out. May be about the suspect. Same name.”

He handed Lanagan a visitor’s card. Scrawled across it in a nervous hand was: “Jennie Ward. Important.”

In the ante-room a girl with a crutch arose to

meet him, but he motioned her back to her seat. She had the pinched face and the wistful sadness of those condemned to life but half-whole. It was evident before she spoke a dozen words that she came as so many others come to the newspaper ante-room: in futile, uncomprehending protest at the entire system of News.

It was her brother, Jimmy, who was under arrest, and she said he was innocent. Jimmy told her he found the ring, therefore he did find it, because Jimmy never told her a lie. She did not see why papers should print such things, even if he had been arrested, and why they did not try to prove a boy innocent rather than aid the police in trying to prove him guilty.

Lanagan listened patiently at first, with an occasional question; and then he listened with a deepening interest as the girl's fervour grew.

"It is only the rich whose wrongs you right!" she exclaimed at last passionately. "What rights have we poor? I cannot afford even a lawyer. Mamma does washing. She is old and timid, and she was afraid to come to the papers. I mostly educated myself, sir; I had to. I have learned the piano at the Sunday school. I have a little class of pupils there. The teacher helps me get them. I just teach the first lessons, you know. I make \$4.25 a week. Mamma makes about \$7 when she is not sick. Jimmy has been making \$8, with a raise to \$9.50 coming the first. So you see we manage to

make out, all of us together, and send my three little brothers to school.

"And now — now — all the people on the street are talking about us and my little brothers won't go to school — the others call them names — everyone saw Jimmy's picture in your paper to-day —

"Won't you please help us? We haven't any men folks to fight for us now with Jimmy locked up. Please, sir, help us get Jimmy out!

"I went to police headquarters and waited hours and hours to see Jimmy — and then — and then finally the detectives — they took me and said I would see Jimmy — but they took me to a room and shut the door — and they swore at me —

"They said I — better tell everything or go to — jail — why — why they talked like I — knew about the robbery and they were — going — to arrest — me —"

She fainted; just drooped quietly back into the chair, wearily, hopelessly, woefully, without so much as a sigh. Lanagan breathed quickly as he ministered to her.

"Poor little sis!" he said, softly. "Plucky little mother of the tenements! Taking a full-grown man's place! But what a handicap!"

Her eyes opened. "Oh," she fluttered, her thin, sensitive lips quivering in apology, "I fainted, didn't I? How queer. I never fainted before. I cannot afford to give way like that. Sometimes, though! Oh, sometimes I wish I could! I wanted to in front

of the detectives — my brain whirled and whirled and whirled with fire like pinwheels but I wouldn't — I wouldn't give them the satisfaction!" Her slight hands with their long fingers clenched; her eyes sparkled. "Harrigan. That is his name. He was the worst. The brute! oh, if I were a man! I would kill him for what he said to me!"

"Never mind Harrigan. Leave him to me," said Lanagan. "You are only exciting yourself. Go home now and try not to worry. We are going to look into your brother's case."

"Thank you," she said, with shining eyes. There were at no time any tears. She had been trained in a life where tears are inadequate.

Lanagan watched her as she hobbled on her one crutch down the hall to the elevator, her useless limb swinging loosely. She was a pathetic little figure, with her man's brain, her grown woman's pride, and her little misshapen body; a fourteen year old girl, wearing "long clothes" in grim earnest. A quick pang shot through him; cripples always saddened him. They have infinitely so much less than the meanest wastrel who has health.

"The judgment of a cold-blooded detective against the judgment of a loyal sister," mused Lanagan. "Which is it?"

An hour's study at police headquarters of the reports on all ten of the burglaries established in Lanagan's mind one settled conviction: they were all committed by the same author, and whoever it

was — whether an individual or a gang — had first become reasonably familiar with the interior arrangements of the houses entered, and with the daily routine of the households.

In the Robbins case, for instance, from the time the last member of the household left the bedroom, or second floor, to go down to the dining-room on the first floor for dinner, until a member of the household returning upstairs found the evidences of the burglary, only twenty-five minutes had passed; and yet in that time the thief or thieves had entered the house and had left it after cleanly ransacking three bedrooms. An open bathroom window and the drain pipe to the ground gave mute evidence of the burglar's route.

In all of the cases only precious stones were taken: nothing monogrammed was touched, nor watches, silverware, trinkets or bric-à-brac. But this was of no particular consequence. The average expert thief prefers the precious stones. Removed from their settings they are difficult to identify and easy to negotiate.

"Professional work, all of it," muttered Langan, arguing to himself. "But what about that message?"

The extraordinary boldness that had marked all the crimes culminated in the Robbins case when a man, with smoked glasses, heavy moustache, soft hat pulled down and ulster turned up, gave a small boy ten cents to carry an envelope to the Robbins

home, but a block from where the man stood. Enclosed in the message, which offered to return the jewelry for \$5,000 cash, was a brooch that had been among the articles stolen. It was sent as proof that the offer was genuine. The message said the police were not to be notified. If the family desired to negotiate, they were to send the boy back with the single word, "Yes," and they would be communicated with later.

In the excitement of receiving the message under such singular circumstances a member of the family, forgetting or disregarding the caution, telephoned the police, holding the boy in the house. The police misunderstood the call, and a patrol wagon load of reserves clattered up to the door within ten minutes, under the impression murder was being done.

Naturally, the man on the corner had ample time to escape. No further offers to negotiate came to the family. On the second day the police placed under arrest the Ward boy. He was employed as a helper with the Phoenix Vacuum Cleaning Company, which had been engaged a few days before at the Robbins home.

"And at the start he made a bad case, superficially, by his contradictions," reflected Lanagan, reviewing the case.

In their investigations the detectives, examining the two men and the helper, Jimmie Ward, who had operated the cleaning apparatus at the Robbins

house, learned that the boy had been noticed that morning examining a diamond ring. Asked where he got it, he had replied he found it on the floor of the washroom at the establishment. No one claimed the ring. The matter was called to the attention of Cutting, the proprietor and manager of the company, but he knew of no customer having reported such a loss.

The detectives — Harrigan and Thomas — took the boy to headquarters for further questioning, and he had there said he found the ring on the sidewalk. On that contradiction he was placed under arrest and locked up in detainue.

Further, the police regarded as damaging the fact that a robbery a week previous had been committed in the same neighbourhood in a home where the cleaning apparatus had been engaged, the Ward boy serving as the helper in that house also. He had worked with a different crew of men than had been on the Robbins house, and this fact, in the police theory, eliminated the remaining employees of the company as it was highly improbable that they were all in a "second story" ring. They redoubled their efforts to find the supposed connections of Ward on the theory that he operated with an outside gang.

" 'Jimmy said he found the ring and if he said he found it he did find it,' " said Lanagan, repeating the sister's earnest declaration. " Well, for her sake — I hope he did."

Hour after hour Lanagan, tirelessly, kept at his

rounds, visiting in turn each of the ten homes in the western addition that had been robbed during the last three months.

Long before he reached the Robbins home, the last of the ten, he had formed his startling theory. In nine of the cases he had discovered that which he set out in search of: a constant condition present in them all. There was just one question that he wanted to ask at the Robbins home.

He found the home in a flurry of excitement. Police headquarters had rung up and asked that a member of the household come at once to the detective bureau to identify if possible a bracelet that it was believed had been among the stolen articles and that had been recovered.

Lanagan, arriving just as the senior Robbins was leaving in his automobile, was invited to accompany him. He did so; but first he had asked and had had answered the one question he came to ask.

In the office of O'Rourke, night captain of detectives, they found O'Rourke, Harrigan and Thomas grouped around a woman, huddled down on a chair. Lanagan caught a low sob, a helpless, forlorn, frightened sob, that sent a curious sensation of nausea through him. He stepped quickly forward to gaze down upon the misery-racked form of the cripple, Jennie Ward.

"I don't know anything! Oh, I don't know anything!" she wailed. "I found it on the door step!"

O'Rourke had turned as they entered. He

stepped to his own desk, holding the bracelet toward Robbins.

"That is my daughter's bracelet, sir," Robbins said. "It was my Christmas present to her."

Harrigan, listening, nodded in satisfaction.

"I knew it," he said. "I guess we had better throw the little gutter snipe in, cap; a little pressure now and she's bound to squeal."

"Oh, oh, oh!" Sobs were shuddering from the girl.

"*Squeal!* You damned clodhopper! Give her a bullet and kill her now if you are trying to! You don't throw her in!"

It was Lanagan. He had whirled from the huddled form to send the words cutting through the air at Harrigan like a whiplash. The girl flung up a white face in a swift look of wild hope.

"*I don't know anything, Mr. Lanagan! Don't let them put me in jail!*"

She threw herself from her chair in an attempt to clasp his arm but her withered and shrunken limb crumpled under her and she sank to the floor with a sharp cry of pain. Lanagan leaned and lifted her to the chair.

Harrigan had an ugly look as he measured the distance from himself to Lanagan.

"Yes, Harrigan; you rotten thief. Clodhopper is too mild for you!"

"You bum," said Harrigan, with deadly levelness. "You drunken bum."

Lanagan's leap was catlike. It took all the mighty O'Rourke's strength to tear his fingers free. Lanagan was not a Queensbury fighter when tackling two hundred pounds of policeman. O'Rourke had Harrigan by the arms. Thomas had Lanagan. For a second or two there was not a sound but the panting of grappling men. Then discipline told. Harrigan's arms relaxed.

"You are relieved from duty, Officer Harrigan," said O'Rourke. "Until I lay the matter of your insubordination before the Chief."

The detective turned on his heel and walked from the room, stopping at the door. "I'll get you, Lanagan," he said. Lanagan ignored him.

"Now, Jack," said O'Rourke, grimly, as Thomas freed the reporter. "Why won't we throw this girl in?"

"Because," said Lanagan, still breathing heavily, "she is innocent."

"How do you know?"

"I know. That is enough. If you won't take my word ring up the Chief and he will."

O'Rourke knew the close friendship between Lanagan and Chief Leslie and the confidence the chief had in his judgment. He gazed doubtfully at the girl and then at Robbins. Secretly, he respected Lanagan also and he was impressed by Lanagan's assurance.

"We aren't justified in holding the girl," he said

to Robbins. Then to Lanagan: "All right. You win."

But as Lanagan left the room with the girl to send her home in the police automobile, O'Rourke had an afterthought. He turned to Thomas.

"We might just as well cover up. Watch the house to-night. There's something queer about this whole business that I don't get yet."

"Whatever happens keep calm until I see you again," was Lanagan's last counsel to the girl. Through the scene in O'Rourke's office she had kept crouched down in her chair, watching with wide eyes; save for one quickly shrilled: "*Give it to him!*" as Lanagan's sinewy fingers twined around Harrigan's throat.

"It was terrible of me to say that, wasn't it?" she asked. "But I couldn't help it! He is a bad man! I feel it!"

"He's what we call a 'wrong' detective," said Lanagan, drily. "Don't think about him any more."

"Let me have Norton," he said, some moments later to Sampson, and to me he said:

"I want you to cover 211 Clementina Street. Don't bother anybody. Just see who goes in or out or hangs around there. I'll pick you up later down there. Wait for me no matter what happens."

He jumped into a taxicab at the curbing and whirled away out Market Street. I hastened to my

station, in that gloomy, narrow street of rookeries. Almost opposite 211 was a deep doorway. I flattened back in the shadows, trusting to luck that the occupants were all in bed and that no one would walk up on me. I was not bothered. An hour passed and another. I heard someone come out of a house a few doors above me and saunter down the street toward me. I huddled back. The figure passed within six feet of me. By the dim rays of the gas lamp on the corner, throwing its feeble area of light a dozen yards, I recognised Detective Thomas.

He slipped into the side door of the corner saloon. "Off his job, whatever it is," I said to myself. "Something should happen now. It usually does in such cases."

It did. Noiselessly on the opposite sidewalk passed a figure in a heavy black overcoat with a high collar turned up around the ears and a soft hat pulled down. In front of 211 the figure stopped for a fraction of a second, it may have been to look for something that had been dropped; but it appeared to me to fumble an instant by the steps. The figure then passed rapidly on.

Thomas, a fresh cigar between his teeth, sauntered back to his post. The figure that had stopped at 211 had disappeared around the corner at Seventh Street. Thomas had certainly missed the episode entirely.

There was a long interval. The door at 211

opened, slowly. A girl came out, finally; a girl with a crutch. She came down the three steps, looked up and down and across the street, and suddenly dropped down and I could see that she was rummaging in the space under the stairs.

Stepping easily, I saw Thomas, his cigar still puffing leisurely, cross the street. He was almost beside the girl before she saw him. There came a faint cry of alarm, quickly smothered, as she straightened up, her back to the house. I rushed quickly to them in time to hear Thomas's voice:

"Well, miss, find any presents? Little late for Santa Claus, isn't it? But let's see. Let's just see what you were looking for under those stairs."

He dropped to his knees, threw his pocket flash about, and arose, a small package wrapped in a newspaper in his hand. The girl was staring with startled, wide eyes. She was breathing quickly, her thin bosom rising and falling. Thomas wheeled on me, was about to snap at me, thought better of it, and remarked:

"Oh, well, you're dropped to me. I might as well let you in."

He tore off the paper wrapping from the package and in the flash of his pocket light I saw the glitter of a pair of diamond ear drops.

"Do you make them?" he asked, triumphantly. I nodded. The jewels unquestionably answered the description of those stolen from the Robbins home. It came to me like a physical blow, the shock that

such a frail, broken bit of humanity as the little back alley waif before me was entangled in a thieves' gang. I knew she was the suspect's sister. She still held her defiant place against the house.

"I guess this time, young lady, you will go in," said Thomas, tersely. "Do you want anything from the house? Got any thing to say? You are going to jail."

She began to tremble violently, but her lips were still compressed.

"No," she managed to say at last. "No! I was watching! I know now! I know! But I will not talk to you! Please don't waken my mamma or my little brothers — let us go — now — if I must." She started to hobble away in feverish haste, shaken with sobs that she would not permit to escape her lips. Seldom have I been affected with such a sense of sadness as came over me then: all of the tragedy that would have been in the situation with even a whole girl under such circumstances was doubled by her condition.

"Got her dead to rights that time," chuckled Thomas to me. "She'll spill now sure. The rest of the stuff must be cached around here somewhere."

"You think there is no question about the Ward boy?" I asked.

"Not the slightest. And she is in and is covering up. They're all crooked, these back alley rats. There's more in the gang, of course. That stuff was put there, I suppose, to-night, for her to

'shove.' Probably she peddles it. You never can tell how these gangs operate."

I glanced again at the pitiable little misshapen thing dragged away from her home to a cell and an iron bed at the city prison and I couldn't trust myself to reply to Thomas.

By a curious change that is gradually making me less valuable as a newspaper man the older I become in the business, I find myself unconsciously taking sides against my paper with fellow beings whose frailties or sorrows make them grist for the newspaper mill. I felt so toward this poor girl now, a victim of congenial influence in all likelihood; obviously a product of the malnutrition of the under classes.

Thomas took his prisoner away in a taxi and I hurried to a telephone and gave the story to Sampson in that fashion. I then hastened back to Clementina Street, where to my great relief, I was picked up by Lanagan within a few moments.

I related everything to him. When I had finished his eyes shone more brightly than the gas jet over our heads. Never had I beheld him so far from the composure for which he was noted. For a minute or two he anathematised O'Rourke by all the carded oaths and a few that he invented.

"Back, back in jail, is she! So, O'Rourke couldn't take my word! We'll see, oh, we'll see! Wait."

He ran up the steps to 211. After a long period,

the door opened. It was the mother. Briefly Lanagan explained what had happened. The poor old toothless soul was about past being shocked further. But quickly Lanagan, in that compelling way of his, calmed her fears. He promised that she would have her son and daughter back — before daylight.

Before daylight! It fairly took my breath away.

“What is it, Jack? Give me a line,” I demanded in excitement. “Heavens, man, it’s quarter to two! How are you going to get a story in the paper tonight now? You’ll only break it for all the papers.”

Lanagan stopped short in his rapid walk and laid his hand on my shoulders.

“I’ve been in this game fifteen years, Norrie,” he said, with a solemnity new in him. “Let me tell you something, and I say it who have the right: there comes a time just once every so often when a newspaper man puts humanity above his paper. Remember that. You are betraying no trust with your paper when you do; you are betraying your trust with yourself, with your fellow man, and with your conscience when you do not. This is one of them.”

That was all. But many times in the years that have whirled by since then and since that strange, marvellous man passed out of the newspaper life of the west, have those words come back out of the dark of a back alley, to guide me.

He was not working for an “exclusive” now; he was working to free a mite of a cripple girl and her

stunned and misused brother from the inner tier of cells at the city prison.

He said no more. At Market Street he flung open a taxicab door and we jumped in. He called an address to the driver. It was Chief Leslie's home. We were there within fifteen minutes. Lanagan held his finger on the button until the door swung open and the Chief himself appeared, wrapped in a lounging robe, his hair tousled, his beard ruffled, but his grey eyes wide and alert. Lanagan brushed in and I after him. He sat the Chief down on a settee and for ten minutes he hammered away. At last Leslie's fist banged the settee arm.

"By the Lord Harry, you're right! And I want to flash that bird again! It all comes back to me now; I couldn't make out the other day where I had seen him before. Little stouter, but same man or I'll cut my throat!"

He took the stairs to the next floor three at a time. Within five minutes he was back, fully dressed.

"Got your machine out here yet?"

"Yes," said Lanagan. "But don't forget the Wards."

Leslie stepped to the telephone stand and to his private line to headquarters.

"Prison," he said, shortly. "Prison? Give me the matron. Mrs. Conness? Take that Ward girl into your room and give her the best you have until

I get down. Give me Andrews. Sergeant Andrews? Take that Ward boy to the matron's room and give him the best you have until I get down there." He hung up the receiver. "Come on. We'll pick up Brady. He lives just around the corner. We better get Maloney, too; he's not far away. If this is the bird I think it is, we'll take no chances. Known as the 'Swallow.' Two timer, Moyomemsing prison. Porch climber. Came out here about fifteen years ago and reported on, saying he wanted a chance to make good. We kept track of him for a couple of years. He was clerking and doing the right thing. Then we lost him."

"I didn't identify him that closely," said Lanagan. "But he's the man who did this trick and the other nine."

Within twenty-five minutes Brady and Maloney were crowded into the machine with us. Lanagan gave a direction. At Pacific Avenue and Octavia Street we stopped, in the heart of the fashionable western addition. With Lanagan and Leslie in the lead, Brady and I next and Maloney bringing up the rear, we straggled along for several blocks.

At Washington and Buchanan Streets the Chief and Lanagan had stepped back and signalled us. We closed up. From the middle of the block on Washington Street came the sound of a taxicab starting. Leslie looked around the corner as the machine came towards us, and stepped to the street, flashing his shield. The machine stopped. The

door opened. A head appeared. A familiar voice came.

"Hello, Chief! What's up?"

Detective Harrigan stepped out.

"You're up," said Leslie, with a bitter oath. "You are under arrest. Brady, search the prisoner."

Quick as a knife blade springs back Harrigan's hand went to his hip; but as quick as he was, Leslie was quicker. There was a click, click and Harrigan stood before his superior officer and his brother detectives, manacled. With practised fingers Brady was running through his clothes. He passed over Harrigan's revolver, handcuffs and billy. He brought forth a leather wallet. Leslie tore it open. It held an assortment of jewelry, jumbled together.

"So!" he said, his voice shaking with rage, "you knew it was the Swallow, did you? And you have been shaking him down for half the loot? Well, Officer Harrigan, you and the Swallow will be splitting cobble stones inside of a month. You dirty, rotten, gutter scut! You were framing to send two little kids to prison, were you? I wish I had let you pull that gun! We'd have saved the county the expense of a trial!"

He tore Harrigan's coat back and ripped his star from his breast. He ground it under his heel until the number it held was obliterated, and then he hurled it spinning into the air and over the corner house. It landed faintly on a distant roof.

Harrigan noticed Lanagan for the first time and sprang for him, raising his manacled hands. But Leslie stopped him with a drive to the jaw that sent him staggering back against the machine.

"Take him in, Maloney," ordered the Chief. "I've seen enough of him. We'll get along without you now."

Harrigan said not a word. He stumbled into the machine, Maloney following. It drove away.

"Jack Lanagan," said Leslie, "I wish you were on my staff. You could have O'Rourke's job tonight."

"Thanks, Chief, I'll be satisfied if you send O'Rourke to the fog belt," replied Lanagan, sardonically. "Put a man like Royan in his place and you'll have the kind of head the bureau needs."

"Royan goes," said the Chief. "You're entitled to something on this night's work."

"We've got to hurry. Our man may have noticed that taxi incident."

"I don't think so. Harrigan came out of the house." We walked up the street. "Take the rear, Brady," said Leslie, and the detective stepped quietly down the cement path at the side of a fairly pretentious home. Leslie, Lanagan and I tiptoed up the front steps. We stood to one side, while Lanagan took the door. He rang twice. Footsteps came. It was evident Harrigan's host had not yet retired.

"That you, Harrigan?" the voice came from

inside before the door opened. Lanagan mumbled a yes. The door swung back and Donald Cutting, Esq., proprietor and general manager of the Phoenix Vacuum Cleaning Company stood staring at Lanagan from the brilliantly lighted hallway. For an instant he was speechless. Then he shouted:

"Well, what the devil do *you* want around here at this hour of the morning? What gets into you reporters, anyhow? Has a citizen got any rights in his own home at all?"

"There aren't many that you have." It was Leslie. He had swung to the door directly before Cutting.

His revolver was at Cutting's waist.

"Just keep your hands a little higher, Cutting: you're pretty nifty with those digits of yours. Now back in there, so we can all sit down and talk."

Cutting stood an instant as though frozen, and then mechanically stepped back. We all walked in. The door was closed.

"'Swallow,'" said the Chief, "you're through. We've got Harrigan with the goods. Where's the rest of the loot? I mean outside the Robbins stuff. We've got that located."

Cutting's head dropped to his hands. He sat in silence, bowed.

"Donald, what is it? Is there any trouble?" A woman's voice came over the balustrade. He straightened up, as though an electric current had shot through him.

"Nothing, Molly," he said. "Just some old friends dropped in on me. I will be at liberty soon."

"Your wife?" asked Leslie. "My wife," replied Cutting.

In another moment she was sweeping from the broad stairway in a silken kimono, her hair flowing loosely, and stood before us.

Cutting looked directly at her, and in her eyes there was a light of questioning. "I must leave you, Molly," he said. Still looking at him in that singular way, she asked: "For how long?"

"It is not in my power to say. These men are police officers. They knew me from the east. They want me to go down to the jail with them."

"Will you be there long?"

"If I could help myself, I would not go at all."

"Oh," she said, with a nervous laugh. "I understand. Something possibly about that poor boy in your employ and that robbery."

Lanagan's black eyes were studying the woman intently; Leslie was watching Cutting. Both, I could see, were puzzled. Even I, with my duller perceptions, was sensible that there was some subtle undercurrent in this conversation; something cryptic that I could not solve.

"You will need your hat," she said, and turned to the hat rack in the rear of the hall.

"It's all right, Chief," said Cutting, in an aside, arising, "you've got me. Please don't make any scene before him."

She returned with the hat. He fumbled with it.

"Kiss me," he said. She did so; left his arms, but came back to them, a gush of tears starting as she clung to him in a passionate embrace.

"Go," he said, faintly, his voice breaking. She turned and stumbled for the stairs. A quick look flashed from Lanagan to the Chief.

"One minute, madam," said Leslie, sternly. "You had better come along, too."

"No!" cried Cutting. "Never, Chief, as you are a man! Never in a million years! She has never known of my work out here; she knew me before Moyomemsing; she stuck by me during it all; she married me and we came out here. She knows nothing; nothing. She may have suspected, but she knew nothing. The old call claimed me, going through those houses making estimates on cleaning; why, it's a disease, that's all, Chief! I got pressed for money. I undertook too much in my business. I couldn't handle it. I had notes to meet. I just fell naturally back to the old easy way. That's all. Just went back to it because that's the way I was born, I suppose; crooked."

"Humph. Where did you send the stuff?"

"East. Except the Robbins. Needed money bad, didn't want to take a chance handling it here, so I tried the message. What Harrigan didn't get is down at the office in the safe."

"We suspected that," said Leslie. "How long has Harrigan been cutting with you?"

"Oh, well, don't ask me that. Some time. He's a wolf. I am a crook, but he's got me lashed to the mast. The kid stuff was none of mine. I did lose one ring at the office. The boy found it. He got scared and contradicted himself. Harrigan framed the other thing about the house."

"I guess it's pretty nearly an even break," said Leslie. He stepped forward to put on the wrist nippers. As he did so Cutting raised his hat to his head; his hand, coming down, stopped for a fraction of a second at his lips.

"Better this," he said, rapidly, backing away, "I couldn't go back. I'm a pretty old man, you know."

As though he had been shot through the heart he dropped in a heap. Lanagan leaped for him. The Chief bent over him. They arose together. Lanagan picked up the hat and turned back the sweat band. Inside was a little envelope, pasted to the felt. It was half filled with white powder.

"Cyanide," said Lanagan.

Such was the passing of the Swallow.

Lanagan, in his search for similar conditions in the ten burglaries found but one: that Cutting had personally visited each house to make the estimates of cost. That fact, coupled with the ring found at his establishment, convinced Lanagan that he and he alone was the man. Cutting worked four machines, each with its separate crew, and no other

employee had worked in more than three out of the ten houses.

Anxious to keep track of Cutting after his theory began to impress him, he had learned that he was at the theatre. He had picked him up after the show, trailed him to a café, followed him in a taxicab as he took his wife home, and kept at his tail lights when he returned after one o'clock to discharge the machine and walk to a saloon well south of Market Street where he had met Harrigan. That was Lanagan's first definite information that Harrigan and Cutting were involved.

Cutting and Harrigan had separated, Lanagan following Cutting to his establishment. He remained there some time, busied about his safe, and had then apparently gone directly home.

It was then that Lanagan picked me up.

Harrigan, of course, was the man who had passed through the alley. He then had gone on out to Cutting's house, for a final distribution of the spoils, Cutting having evidently taken Harrigan's share from the safe.

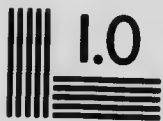
Late that same afternoon Lanagan sat in Leslie's office with Robbins, who had just received his jewelry. Robbins drew out his check book.

"If you will permit me?" he said, to Lanagan. He had filled in "\$250." "How do you spell your name?"



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(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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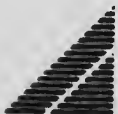
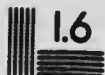
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Lanagan laughed. "Make it out to the Adams Piano Company," he said.

Robbins looked politely inquisitive, but asked no questions. He wrote in the name. But Leslie was not so polite.

"What in the name of Sam Hill are you going to do with a piano?"

"Nothing, myself. I wouldn't take it any more than I would take the money. You know that. But there is a girl I know who can use that piano and use it to very good advantage. And what's more, she's entitled to it."

He picked up the check and carefully folded it, placing it in his pocket.

"I'm going over now and pick out the best piano the money will buy," he said, "and I'm going to send it, with the compliments of Mr. Robbins, Chief Leslie and Jack Lanagan to a little home at 211 Clementina Street, Miss Ward is the name."

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

THE Stockslager case will be recalled immediately upon the Pacific Coast as a crime of some years ago marked by the peculiar atrocity of the circumstances. Aged Mrs. Stockslager, living in a small cottage at the extreme northern end of Thirty-third Avenue—in those days a region sparsely settled and visited chiefly by picknickers bound for Baker's Beach—was found one Sunday morning literally hacked to pieces.

From the location of portions of the dismembered body it was apparent that the author had planned to carry the evidences of the crime away and sink them in the waters of the ocean, which tumbled and rolled on the rocks at the base of the steep cliff that marked the extremity of Thirty-third Avenue. A potato sack, with the torso, was found near the rear door to the cottage, indicating that whoever had committed the deed had probably been interrupted while carrying the remains to the bay; and had then fled.

A kitchen butcher knife was the weapon used. Robbery was evidently the motive, for the hut had been ransacked thoroughly, such poor and mean

trinkets as the recluse was known to possess having been taken.

Mrs. Stockslager did a small business in sandwiches, pop corn and soda water with the picknickers. The rumours of a miser's hoard that usually attached to such as she had long been current. But whether the slayer or slayers realised a profit in money could not be determined as there was no one who could be found sufficiently familiar with her life to say whether she did or did not have a store of money on the premises.

Such were the general facts which Sampson, city editor of the *Enquirer*, skeletonised tersely to Lanagan as that police reporter of superior talents reported for duty after a lapse of more than ordinary duration.

"Hop to it, Jack," added Sampson. "You've had your salary for two weeks. Show your appreciation."

Those were the days before automobiles might be requisitioned — occasionally — for big assignments, and Lanagan, taking the steam line that in those days twisted around the ocean shore, was considerably later than the coroner's deputies, who had already discharged their functions and now were engaged in making an impromptu meal upon the old woman's supply of sandwiches, the only loot available.

Phillips and Castle, special duty men from the Golden Gate Park police station, were also on the

scene. The "upper office" at headquarters is recruited — where it is not recruited by politics or favouritism — by these active young officers on special duty at the outside stations, and Lanagan knew that this particular brace of plainclothes men were hardworking and ambitious and without the "strings" that many times bring the ablest of upper office men a trifle too considerably into touch with the outlaw clans.

"What do you make of it, Phillips?" asked Lanagan, as the officer placed his note-book in his pocket.

"Wouldn't call it a suicide, exactly," replied Phillips, offishly.

Lanagan laughed. "No?" he drawled. "I wouldn't put it past you to call it natural causes, though."

Phillips flushed to the base of his thick neck but held himself from answering. He knew Lanagan by reputation and did not care to match wits with him. Lanagan worked with most of the "upper office" men on intimate terms, but found it occasionally necessary to put a "crimp" in the arrogance, or ignorance, of the outside station officers, who do not come into contact with newspaper men as frequently as the down town men and at times elect to affect the same impartiality with which they treat ordinary persons. Such Lanagan took pride in bringing to a proper appreciation of the honourable place occupied by the brothers of the Tribe.

Lanagan ignored the two detectives and gave his

attention to the coroner's deputies, the cottage and outskirts, and the contents of the wicker basket. Before the next train arrived, bringing a dozen reporters and camera men from the other papers, and myself, Lanagan had finished his investigations. I found him seated on a salt grass hummock, smoking and gazing absently up and down the ragged, rocky shore line. The surf was tumbling heavily although a few hundred yards out the sea was an undulating swell of greenish beauty.

"Some fine day," was his greeting. "Let's take a stroll down."

We made our way down the cliff to the rocks at the water's edge.

"Imagination is oftentimes a great thing in solving crime," he remarked, as he poised himself perilously on a slippery rock and relit his cigar. "That and the 'take a chance' instinct. Call it a hunch, bull-luck, accident, or as one great French detective said, 'le grand hasard.' Beautiful picture, is it not?"

He pointed toward the Heads, where a Pacific Mail steamship was just putting her pilot down the side. She made a fine picture in truth, with her clean, lithe lines and her smoke blowing back like the wind-blown tresses of a girl.

We strolled along the intermittent stretches of sandy beach or clambered over the rocks and it finally struck me that Lanagan's ferret eyes were not at all absent-minded or entirely busied with the

natural beauties of the scene, but that he was examining closely every square inch of the ground we travelled; and the waters as we passed.

"Phillips is rather cagey," he remarked. "He'll have to be taught his place. He's a good officer, though; and Leslie has his eye on him. We must look out for that chap. He not only has good legs, a prime requisite of a detective or a reporter, but he has a head that really works once in a while."

He sat down finally under the shelter of a great rock and motioned me to do likewise. Then he pulled from his pocket, carefully tucked away, a V-shaped piece of paper written over with Chinese characters. The corner that made the apex of the V was crinkled.

"What do you make of it?"

"It's a piece of a Chinese newspaper," I replied.

"Really! You would do credit to Phillips.

Examine it this time."

I tried again, but could make nothing of it.

"Look."

He uncrumpled the slight crinkling at the apex and a tiny bit of red paper was exposed. I was ashamed of my own lack of observation; but just as puzzled as before and said so.

"I should say," said Lanagan, "that this paper with the Chinese characters was a piece of wrapping paper; that someone tore it from a package with his finger nails and that a portion of the red wrapper of the package itself, came off in his finger

nails. See?" He crumpled it up and sure enough it fitted neatly into the space under his finger nail.

"Well?" I asked, vaguely. Then I had an inspiration. The Chinese burial ground was only an eighth of a mile away. Lanagan obviously had some theory connecting Chinese with the crime, the bit of paper evidently having dropped from a Chinaman's blouse. I told him so. He laughed immoderately but indulgently and carefully put the bit of paper away in his pocket.

"You're a stem-winder when it comes to writing fancy leads for my police stories," he said, still chuckling, "but I guess I'll have to give up for keeps trying to make a detective out of you. I have shown you in perspective as it were, during the past twenty minutes, the solution of this entire crime — if my theory is not altogether wrong — and you can't see it. Let's get busy. Your legs can at least be of service to me.

"I want you to stick around here for a couple of hours. Tackle everybody in sight for a knowledge of Mrs. Stockslager; how long she has been out here, her past, who her family are if any, who her visitors have been; if she had any particular idiosyncrasies or hobbies. Take in all the houses within a radius of a mile — there are only four or five — and try to get some kind of a line on her. Don't overlook the small boy. In out-of-the-way regions like this he is the pioneer of civilisation and you may tumble on to more through some roving

urchin than all the grown-ups in the county. I will leave instructions at the office where to meet me later. I anticipate lively entertainment ahead."

When we got back to the cottage the coroner's deputies had gone, as had Phillips and Castle. Camera men were taking the house from many angles; artists were busy sketching the interior — that was the heyday of "yellow journalism" — marking the "spot" with the old familiar cross. Reporters were still cluttering around. A crowd of morbid persons, attracted out of the very sky like vultures, were already gathered.

"Suppose you've got it all cleared?" remarked Bradley of the *Times* to Lanagan. He was Lanagan's nearest approach to a rival as a police reporter.

"Clear as print can make it," replied Lanagan as he turned for the train.

He ran for the car, leaving Bradley secretly uneasy. He had a wholesome regard for Lanagan and knew that he was of few words and not given to wasting them. I slipped the rest of the newspaper men and tramped the sandhills "covering" all the houses, "buzzing" an occasional small boy. The best I could get for two hours' hard work — and the first "tip" came from an unwashed, sling-shooting young American — was a vague story that no one could substantiate, that Mrs. Stockslager had a worthless son who infrequently visited her for money. I hugged this information close until

I could see Lanagan. It so happened he ordered me to keep it quiet for that day, giving no reasons.

I was chagrined the next morning to awaken and find that Bradley had the same piece of information and had "flashed" it on the front page for an exclusive double-leaded feature to his story.

The search then turned to the son. He could be traced to within six or seven months of the murder. I had to lumber along as best I could in handling the story without Lanagan's assistance. The stories in all of the papers became monotonously uniform. On the third day the interest was thinning. There had not been a single new fact discovered; nor, so far as the *Enquirer* was concerned, had there been a word from Lanagan.

"He must have something," Sampson said to me irritably on the third day. "But take a flier through his hangouts on the chance that he might have gone off again."

I shook my head. "That isn't Lanagan with a story on," I said. "He does his drinking when the story is turned in." Nevertheless I took a quick skirmish to Connor's, Fogarty's and "Red" Murphy's; looked up "Kid" Monahan and some of Lanagan's intimates in the upper office. I could find no trace of him.

Toward evening I dropped back to the *Enquirer* after a final round-up of the ends of the story at police headquarters, and there Lanagan sat with his heels on Sampson's desk, with that pulseless in-

dividual shooting questions at him with the speed and precision of an automatic revolver.

"I've given you all I am free to give just now," said Lanagan, shutting down on the questioning. "You've got a good enough scoop to hold the story for to-morrow. Let me handle the rest in my own way, will you?" He was nettled. "Don't be so didactic. Do you think I've been spending the last three days with a dry nurse?" He was the only man on the *Enquirer* who could take that tone with Sampson and hold his job.

"No. I know you've been on your toes hard, Jack, and I appreciate it. Only the news-call gets the best of me and this story has us all on edge," replied Sampson.

"You're not to go near the prison," continued Lanagan. "I need Norton to-night. Let Martin write the story from here. Stockslager is absolutely out of it. He has been a trusty at the city prison for about six months, which clears him up. Name he goes under is 'Swede' Stockley. The police have known it all along but they have kept it dark for certain reasons which I am not at liberty now to state.

"Lend me that nice, new mackintosh of yours, Sampson. It's raining like blazes and the enthusiastic Mr. Norton and myself will have a hard stand to-night. Take your raincoat, Norton. We are going out looking for ghosts around the Stockslager cottage. There's a real ghost of the old lady

out there and I've wanted for a long time to have a run-in with a genuine spook. She was seen on the cliff last night as the train stopped. McCluskey, the conductor, thought he heard a sort of moaning. He's a pretty nervy chap and the moans, coming it seemed from the hut, didn't scare him much. He walked over that way and silhouetted at the edge of the cliff he swears he saw the old lady herself. It was too much even for McCluskey and he ran back to the train.

"He and the engineer, Roberts, went back with a couple of crowbars although he didn't say what good crowbars would do in tackling a bonafide ghost. They just got one glimpse of the thing and it disappeared and they both swear it couldn't have had time to get any place before they reached the scene. It was a fairly clear night, during a break in the storm, and they wasted five minutes and then went back to their train.

"I was out there to-day and McCluskey told me the yarn. They've kept it quiet around the car barn for fear of being ridiculed. I have them pledged to secrecy. Don't use that angle of the story to-morrow, though, as I want to do some ghost hunting before the whole town hears about it and flocks out there.

"Come on, Norrie. Got your gun?"

That ghost talk gave me all sorts of forebodings. With a black night ahead and a driving rain, ghost hunting on the scene of the murder, in an environ-

ment sufficiently forbidding on a wintry night in any event, failed to stir me to any particular height of enthusiasm.

"Fire ahead," said Sampson, with one of his mirthless grins. But he was sitting comfortably in a steam-heated office.

It was nine o'clock when we boarded the steam cars at the old Central Avenue terminal. McCluskey was a solid-jawed, sensible, self-reliant looking chap. It puzzled me. A sober, steady man like that must have seen something very convincing before sponsoring talk of ghosts.

"Ghost hunting?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Lanagan. "Good feature story, this ghost stuff. Keep it quiet for a day or two longer, will you?"

"Sure. I'll be on the watch for the *Enquirer* to see about it. Looked for it to-night, but didn't see it."

He slowed down for us about an eighth of a mile from the Thirty-third Avenue stop and we dropped off into a bitter rain.

That rain would have quenched the tail fires of hell.

We struggled on, heads down. There was no use in trying to talk and I knew Lanagan would take his own time about giving me any information. We suddenly pulled stiffly up against two bulky, raincoated figures. A dark lantern flashed, first in my face, then in Lanagan's.

"Well, well!" It was Lanagan's ready voice, pitched a trifle high on account of the beating rain. "If it isn't Messrs. Phillips and Castle! Walking to reduce weight, I presume?"

"What are you fellows doing out here?" asked Phillips, gruffly.

"Well, Phillips, seeing that it's you, I'll tell you: It's none of your business. Maybe we're going to swim to the Farallones. Do you understand me perfectly?"

"Isn't it? We'll see. And I don't know whether we want you snuffing around here or not," replied Phillips. He was a choleric man, was Phillips, with a neck too thick even for a policeman. I thought for a moment Lanagan would have us both ordered back, but he only laughed, in that mocking, Machiavelian laugh of his that could rasp like a file on a sore tooth.

"Dear me," he said, "your mood fits the weather, Phillips; very disagreeable. I am not concerned with your wants. I'm going to snuff to my heart's content. Now please step off the right of way and permit us to pass. We are both citizens of this great and glorious city that overpays you most disgracefully in proportion to your attainments; and as such citizens our powers and privileges on the county domain are precisely as full and complete as yours. Phillips, you'll never do. No policeman ever succeeds who begins by antagonising newspaper men. I'm telling you, you won't do. Step

aside, please. We want to go on and we don't purpose to walk around you to do it."

For a moment things looked ugly, with Phillips standing fast. Castle took him by the arm.

"Come on, Tom, you're wrong," he said, and the two officers stepped to one side and we passed on, with Lanagan chuckling aloud.

"Ghost hunting is becoming a regular fad," he said finally. "And I shouldn't be surprised to find a few more hunters scattered around. We will let Phillips and Castle pass."

We stepped quickly to one side and sank down behind a hillock of very wet and very cold sand. Lanagan was correct. The two detectives had turned and followed us. They went on ahead, having missed us.

It was shivery. Here were four men, two trailing two others who assumed they were the trailers; and all bound for a murder house on a black night to hunt ghosts: for it was safe to assume that in some fashion Phillips and Castle had heard the ghost episode. Did we but know it at the time, we were in turn being trailed by two keen eyed, storm-coated men, each of whom kept a ready hand in his overcoat pocket.

For, as Phillips and Castle disappeared on ahead and we were just stepping back to the railroad tracks from our place of concealment, Lanagan suddenly bore back and dropped. I followed suit.

"More ghost hunters," he whispered in my ear,

pointing. Two blurred, indistinct figures passed along the right of way. It was awesome. But Lanagan gave me no time for questions. Stooping low, threshing softly through the dripping salt grass, in and out among the sand dunes, we worked our way gradually toward the cliffs along the ocean. The coat fairly well protected my body, but my shoes were soaked and I was drenched with the cold, numbing rain to my knees.

In a position I should judge about twenty yards from the point where the path from the Stock-lager path led over the cliff to the rocks below, we crouched against a hummock. The ocean roared beneath us and the white froth of the breakers, tumbling on the rocks, could be faintly seen. Each time it would flash into the corner of my eye, I thought it was ghost time. I don't believe in ghosts, of course; but, under such circumstances, one can't help wondering a little bit. From behind us, as we lay there, once, twice, thrice, four times we heard the toot, toot of the train; and I knew that we had lain there for two mortal hours, because the train made hourly round trips.

I thought of Sampson and his snug office and his snug salary; and I compared myself, taking the chances of anything from a pistol ball to pneumonia for my thirty dollars a week. I concluded to quit the business at the end of this scrape. But I always determined to do that under such circumstances. So does every newspaper man; and they always

show up for work the next day. Were we not at least potential paranoiacs we wouldn't be newspaper men. Certainly otherwise we wouldn't do the things we do for the pay we get. Regarding newspaper photographers, there is no question. They are all crazy; except one.

We had drunk the last drop from the healthy flask apiece we had brought and I was settling back in soggy misery for more suffering, my eyes so blurred with watching and staring that I could see slinking forms in fancy every place I turned, when Lanagan's lean hand clutched my leg. He had taken a position lower and nearer the path than I and could get a dim perspective of the edge of the cliff just where the path descended.

I peered ahead. Faintly I could see a single figure, outlined in blurred relief and then it disappeared, apparently into thin air. Whether it was man or woman I could not have told. That it disappeared before my eyes I knew.

It gave one a creepy feeling. I was about to speak to Lanagan but his warning pressure was still on my calf. Probably thirty minutes passed, or it may have been only three. Another figure came into view; and then another, and disappeared.

Then I realised that the first figure had simply slipped down the path and out of sight. I wondered if something of the sort hadn't happened when McCluskey was ghost hunting.

Still Lanagan held that vice-like clutch on me.

Another prolonged interval. Two more figures bulked into view and disappeared. Many more minutes passed and Lanagan said no word. The wind during the hours had died away, but the rain continued, pelting now straight down. Lanagan's hand finally loosened itself from my leg. He pointed over the ocean toward the intermittent flashes of the lighthouse at Land's End. Between the Land's End and Fort Point lights could be seen — the lights of a vessel.

"She's a day overdue on account of the storm," Lanagan shot up at me. "She's heading through the Golden Gate now. We'll have some fun shortly, I reckon."

He straightened up and stretched himself and I did likewise, threshing my arms to start the blood into circulation. I was cold, cramped and grouchy.

"Jack," I said impatiently, "cut out this mystery stuff and give me the facts. You've got me neck and neck with pneumonia now. Kick through with this story, whatever it is, or I'm going to tear down that cliff after those fellows and start something if only to keep warm."

Of course he only laughed. The man must have been made of chilled steel.

"Easy, Norrie. Think of the ten cents' carfare you can charge up on this assignment. That ought to be some compensation, that and the glory of the thing, even if you do get sciatica or lumbago or some other old woman's complaint. Norrie, sometimes

you make me weary. Here I'm staging one of the finest climaxes you have ever participated in. I have adopted a true Shakespearean method of suiting the natural surroundings to the action. It's rather an epic situation, in my opinion.

"Now that liner — it was the Mail boat *Hong-kong* — has finally passed inside the gate. Any minute something may happen, and I pick you out of the entire staff to be here when it does happen; here in an elemental atmosphere where human lives may be snuffed out as we snuffed out the contents of those flasks, and still you're not satisfied. It's a big, vital, gripping situation. Where's your imagination?"

"Oh, hell. You're drunk. Let's chuse down after those men. Let's do something to start things, whatever they may be. I'm cold."

Lanagan was genuinely put out with me. Later I knew why. He had been hanging around those bleak cliffs for two nights and skulking in the sand dunes for two days watching the Stockslager hut. No wonder I was a "quitter" by comparison. He whirled on me and I saw his eyes flashing with that curious light that I had seen in them on rare occasions when he was thoroughly aroused.

"You either quit whining or beat it back to town."

If he had struck me in the face it couldn't have affected me differently, such was the magnetism of that remarkable man.

"I beg your pardon, Jack. I didn't mean to rough you," I said, and he was his natural self in a moment, too.

"All right. Forget it. Let's take a peek over the cliff." We crawled to the edge of the path. Lanagan was ahead. He was on his feet with a leap the instant he struck the ledge, and I up beside him.

"Ha!" he shouted. "*They're at it! Now we'll see! Now we'll see! Le grand hasard!*"

Far down below I saw a half a dozen flares in the darkness; smattered, smeared flares of yellowish light and then all was blackness again. There came no report from weapons, the roaring of the surf drowning that. More by instinct than anything else to be on the scene of action, I made a quick step toward the path. Lanagan's hand was on my arm.

"Wait," he said, curtly. "This is no funeral of ours. Wait."

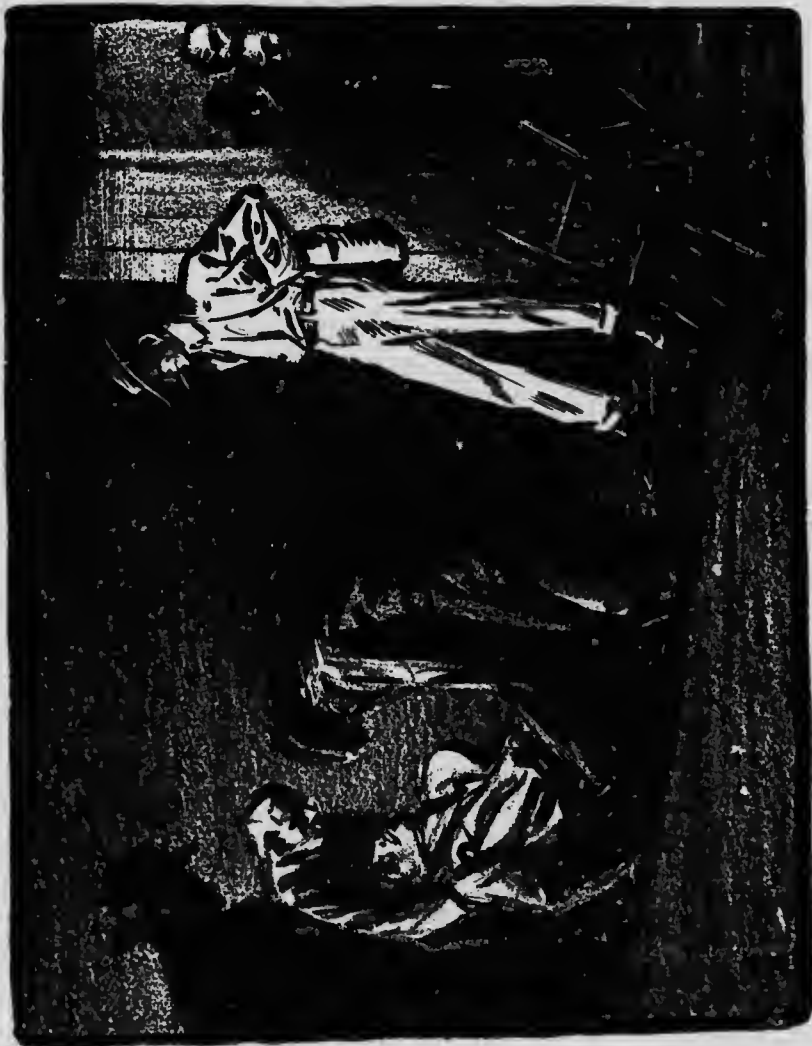
He knelt down, arching his hands around his eyes and peering long and intently.

"Revenue officers," he said. "We can't monkey with them. Haven't got them on my staff like Leslie and his men. They'll be up."

Revenue officers! A light began to dawn upon me.

The toot, toot of the engine came.

"Beat it, Norrie! Hold that train," ordered Lanagan. "There may be some wounded here to rush to town. Quick!"



“On the floor they placed the figure they bore, a stalwart figure of a man.”



I was already off on the run past the Stockslager hut to the little platform where the train stopped. It was some distance away around the curve. As I stood there, with the rain pattering a monotonous tattoo on the planking, there came a sudden groan, a drawn-out, rasping groan, and I whirled toward the house; my body one quiver of gooseflesh. It came again, from up toward the roof; and as it came there was a breathing of light wind across my face. I laughed aloud; but nervously. Another light puff of wind, another long-drawn groan — loose shingles, or a loose piece of clapboarding, giving, evidently, just the slightest against a nail. The other end of the ghostly cry was cleared.

The train pulled in. I told McCluskey there had been a shooting, and to hold the train.

“Can’t back her in. We’ll run out to the first switch!” he cried, as he jumped into the cab with the engineer.

I ran back to find four men bearing a form between them. Lanagan was alongside the leader of the four, talking swiftly. They kicked in the door of the hut and made a light. On the floor, littered just as it had been littered the Sunday morning of the murder discovery, they placed the figure they bore, a stalwart figure of a man. A leg and an arm, I could see, were useless. They felt of his arm and leg and he never winced, staring straight at the ceiling. They ripped away his oilskin coat, his overshirt and undershirt. He had a bullet just over the

heart, a deep wound and one that bled inwardly, for no blood oozed out.

Two of the four men had deposited on the floor bulky bundles wrapped in rubber, around which double pairs of life preservers were strapped.

He who seemed to be the leader of the four ("Marshall, chief revenue inspector," Lanagan whispered to me), took the man's pulse after the examination was ended. No one had spoken. In the faces of all, as far as I could detect in the murky light of the smoky chimney of an oil lamp, was a set, grim look; not the look that officers usually wear when there has been a killing or a successful capture in a crime.

Marshall straightened up. He said, solemnly:

"Billy, I think you are going. What have you got to say? Any message?"

"No, Jim," said the man on the floor, weakly. "You got me right. I went into the thing with my eyes open. Only don't ask me to squeal on the others. I got what I deserved, I guess. I've brought shame to the service and I'm ready to pass. Thank God, thank God," he burst out with sudden choking, "the wife is not here — passed out last year, you know; and there never were any kiddies. No one to suffer but you boys that I've disgraced."

A tear rolled from his eyes to the floor.

"Can I say a word to him, Marshall?" It was Lanagan who spoke. The other men had bowed their heads. On one or two faces I could

see a tear, for all the wetness that the rain had left there.

"Enright," said Lanagan, kneeling down beside the stricken man, "you know you are passing. Make a clean breast. *Who killed Mrs. Stockslager?*"

His eyes closed and he seemed to shrink as though trying to hug the floor he was lying upon. "Whisky!" came Lanagan's sharp whisper. Unconsciously he was taking command of the situation, asserting his natural leadership as he always did in tense moments. Marshall passed him a pocket flask and he forced a sip to Enright's lips, holding his head up with his left arm. The eyes opened.

"*I did.*"

"Oh, God, Billy! No, no! Not that, not that!" It was Marshall. He broke down and sobbed like a boy. Twenty-five years he had been in the federal blue with Billy Enright, one in the revenue, the other in the customs service.

"Yes — *I did!* Jim, get me a priest! Don't let me die like this! For old time's sake, Jim!"

The train was whistling on its return.

"We're taking you right in," said Lanagan, soothingly. "We'll have a priest for you. Why did you kill her?"

Enright motioned for the flask with his free arm. Lanagan gave him a long pull. For a time at least his voice was stronger.

“ She was threatening to tip off the gang. She used to work with us. She was well paid. She didn't know I was in the service. She found it out some way. I came out one day to talk over with her about her threats. I'd been drinking, worrying over fear of exposure. She wouldn't listen to reason. She was a wolf. She goaded me crazy, I guess. She taunted me about being a traitor to the country I served. Well, I lost my head. I grabbed the butcher knife and killed her. So help me God as I am about to die, that's the truth.”

The eyes closed for a space, and then he continued:

“ I stuck a few things in my pockets to make it look like robbery. Then I started to cut up the body to pack it in a sack and bury it or drop it off the cliff. I weakened and dropped it outside the door and ran. It was dark but I ran for miles around over the sandhills and it seemed she was always right after me. It was awful.

“ I got my wits back later. I saw the police and the papers were after the son. I felt easier. There was a big shipment coming in on the *Hongkong* — \$40,000 all told. No one would come out here and take a chance landing it. Afraid the police were watching the house. I volunteered. I figured if any one saw me nosing around I could give them the inspector talk. I hung around last night but the ship was held away out on account of the storm.

I had to come out — again — to-night — that's all, boys —”

The door flung open and through it came Phillips and Castle. McCluskey and Roberts followed. The train had stopped unnoticed, so tense was the interest within the hut in the dying man's recital.

“Quick, take him up,” said Lanagan. They stooped to lift him.

“Here, what's all this?” It was Phillips.

“Stand aside!” came Marshall's blunt command. It was obeyed. Enright's eyes had closed. He was made as comfortable as possible with cushions on the train, as that ancient rattle-trap strained and tugged to make the greatest speed of its history. Enright's eyes did not open on the trip in.

They never opened again.

Lanagan filled in for me the details of the story. The bit of red paper, crinkled inside the paper with the Chinese characters, meant but one thing: opium. Here was where his wide acquaintance with the underworld and Chinatown, the customs service and the water front, aided him.

Puzzling over the presence of an opium wrapping in that isolated hut Lanagan had seated himself upon the salt grass hummock to smoke. Into his field of vision steamed the Pacific Mail liner — and his “hunch” came with it. His examination of the shore followed to locate a cove that would give a

safe place to float the opium to land from a launch or white hall boat by day or night. Such a cove he had found, where the waters for a sixteenth of a mile deposited their driftwood. His theory was complete. The hut was a smuggler's runway; the woman was in the ring and for a breach of faith had been slain, an attempt being made to have it appear she was slain by robbers.

That Marshall and his men had been preparing to close in on the gang that made the cabin their rendezvous Lanagan did not know until the night before.

"Then I found the whole map out here sprinkled with them. Recognised Marshall, who nearly tumbled over me; but he probably figured I was one of his men, and said nothing.

"It was funny. McCluskey and Roberts chasing ghosts with myself and four revenue officers as the audience. I nearly laughed when McCluskey told me the story this morning. They didn't come within fifteen yards of the edge of the cliff, either, although they said they did.

"The weather man told me to-day the storm would blow over by evening and I figured the *Hong-kong* would be making port and the ring would attempt to land their stuff; every liner has been bringing it in. I came out last night on the chance she might try to make port.

"No one suspected Enright."

It was a quarter to one o'clock when the train pulled into the depot. Marshall turned the body over to Phillips and Castle with a terse resumé of the facts and then took his men and his bundles of opium and disappeared. They laid Enright out on a bench to await the coroner's deputies.

Phillips came over to us.

"I guess I acted kind of stiff," he said, in awkward apology. "But I want to hand it to you. You scored on us strong."

Lanagan put out his hand. The detective took it.

"You'll never make any mistake treating newspaper men right, Phillips. Just do this much for us now, will you? Hold off thirty minutes before you telephone the morgue. That will keep the story exclusively for the *Enquirer*."

"I'll do it," said Phillips.

And he did; which may seem to the layman a little thing, but to the newspaper man a detail of vast importance; because it enabled Lanagan, sending the story to the office by telephone, to score once again in sensational manner over his contemporaries, the *Times* and the *Herald*.

